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THE PRAIRIES
OF THE
WESTERN STATES:
THEIR ADVANTAGES
AND
THEIR DRAWBACKS.

By
CHARLES LINDSEY.

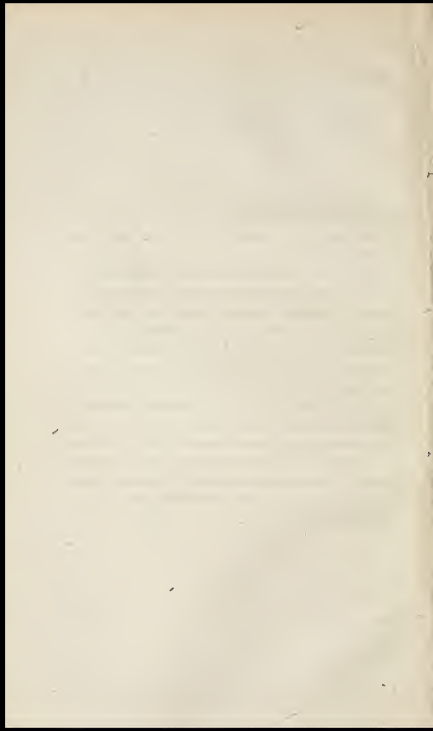
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PREFACE.

Any unoccupied portion of the earth's surface, where the climate is not severe and the soil not sterile, must always excite more or less interest in those countries of the old world, out of which a stream of emigration is constantly being poured. The Prairies of the Western States have, for some years, attracted immigration both from the older States of the American Union and from Europe. To contrast fairly the advantages and drawbacks which they present to emigrants with those offered by other countries, is a task which cannot fail to be beneficial to the emigrating population of Europe. The information contained in the following letters, was obtained during a tour through the Western States, in the Summer of 1859. The letters are published in the hope that they will tend to correct some of the exaggerated statements, which have obtained a wide distribution, regarding the prairies of the West, and especially those of Illinois.



THE PRAIRIES

OF

THE WESTERN STATES.

LETTER I.

Milwaukee to Madison—Oak Openings—Prairie Ploughing—Price of Land—Woodland and Prairie—The Rate of Interest—Eastern Speculators and unoccupied Lands—Wages of Labor—Bad effect of grasping at too much Land—Sprinkling of Southerners—Wolves an obstacle to Sheep Farming—Madison City.

The quantity of prairie land between Milwaukee and Madison, the capital of the State of Wisconsin, is very small. The distance is something less than 100 miles. Though there is little heavily wooded land on the line, there is almost everywhere abundance of timber for all the purposes for which it is required by settlers. The largest prairies met with were scarcely two miles in extent. There are numerous "oak openings," with occasional prairie swamps. The "oak openings," are scattered over with oak trees, and, after the underbrush has been cleared away, present an appearance not unlike that of an English park; more frequently they remind one of an overgrown orchard. The trees are not necessarily cut down when the land is cultivated; they are sometimes left standing, and a crop of grain springs up

around them. When they are cut down or girdled, the stumps, which are easily removed, are not allowed to remain in the ground more than about two years. The largest stumps are taken out for about ten cents each; and eight dollars an acre is about what the complete clearing away of stumps costs. A person with whom I conversed said that he would be willing to contract for the extracting of stumps at that rate. By the method pursued, the country is cleared up at once. These oak openings give the country very much the appearance of France; with this exception, that the trees are necessarily distributed irregularly, and each farm is fenced. The ague spots in Wisconsin are said to be confined to the prairie swamps; while in some other States the rich vegetable mould produces that disease. Wisconsin, in its mixture of prairie and woods, resembles the Red River Country, probably more than any other State in the Union; and there can be no doubt that this circumstance gives it an advantage over Illinois, where prairie prevails exclusively for long stretches, and everything in the shape of wood has to be carried a long distance. It is not the custom for each farmer to break up his own prairie land, for that would involve the keeping of several yoke of working cattle. Sometimes as many as seven yoke are used; but in that case, the furrow turned is from 22 to 30 inches wide. These ploughs will cut up underbrush as thick as a man's wrist. We passed a piece of land just ploughed up, where the scattered underbrush had been literally ploughed down. It is said to rot by the time the crop is ripe, and to give but little

trouble. The keeping of ploughs and oxen to break up prairie land is a distinct business; as the keeping of thrashing machines was and still is, to a limited extent, in England. If the soil is light, and the land is without underbrush, the ordinary teams can be divided; for two yoke of cattle will be sufficient. The cost of this operation varies from \$2 to \$3 an acre; the latter sum probably being more frequently paid. It is not always customary to plough for the second crop: the cultivator is sometimes made to do the work of the plough.

Near Milwaukee, the Milwaukee and Mississippi Railroad passes through an ugly marsh. We then, going westward, pass into a light timbered country. Two years ago, when everything was at its height, a 300 acre farm, about half cleared, twelve miles from the city, situated on this road, sold for \$55 an acre: there was a frame house and barn upon it. I conversed with a person who sold an unimproved farm on this road, about sixteen miles from the city, for \$18 an acre. It is about eighteen months since this sale was made. Cultivated farms, on the railroad, twenty-five miles east of this city, are said to be worth from \$25 to \$30 an acre. Unimproved timber land, I was told by a farmer who resides in the neighbourhood, is worth about as much.

Between Milwaukee and Madison we passed some tamarac swamps, in which the timber was of quite respectable growth. The surface was generally flat; though at some points there were undulations similar to those which occur in the County of Grey and the Eastern

Townships. The crops were generally reported to be good; though most of what we passed appeared to be light. The effects of frost—probably that of the night of June 6—were visible in the blight of the oak leaves. In only one spot did we pass a natural prairie, unmown. The top was extremely even, as level as that of the finest bowling green. The grass did not appear to be at all coarse; but on the contrary looked as if it ought to make excellent fodder. It was, however, something akin to a swamp; and was not a fair specimen of a large prairie. Both grass and grain are generally cut with the scythe in this neighborhood; the reaping machine having been introduced to only a very limited extent. In this prairie there was a small ditch fence. Almost everywhere the road was fenced by a board fence; the cost of which, as far as I can make out, is about a dollar a rod, posts and nails included. The proportion of cultivated land under crop along the line, was much less than in Canada.

The railroad between Milwaukee and Madison passes over a drift formation; and gravel is abundant. There was not a particle of dust. At some of the stations, water is raised and wood cut by wind power. The train, after stopping at one station twenty minutes, started again without giving the least warning. A boy carried water round in the cars, and invited the passengers to drink; an arrangement very common on western railroads.

The presence of destructive wolves prevents any attempt at sheep farming on a large scale; sometimes ten or twenty sheep have been devoured in a night; and cattle

farming has received little attention; the farmers generally being too much engaged in improving their land.

After dinner, I went over to the State House, at Madison, the capital of Wisconsin, and paid my respects to the Secretary of State. I was by him introduced to a military character, of what grade I forgot, in civilian's dress. They were polite and ready to give any information I desired. The Secretary of State is a Southerner, who, from deliberate choice has taken up his residence in Wisconsin. These Southerners are generally persons of influence; and their presence may well explain the influence of Southern principles in the newest of the North-western States. The Secretary of State told me he had travelled the whole country, from the Gulf of Mexico to Lake Michigan; and preferred the Southern portion of Wisconsin to any place else he had seen. The finest lands, in his opinion, lay in the neighborhood of Mineral Point.

When Madison was selected the Capital of the State of Wisconsin, in 1836, it contained but two or three Indian wigwams. Now it has a population of 10,000 or 11,000. It was selected partly on account of the beauty of its position, and partly on account of its centrality, with reference to the then population of the State. It is situated about midway between lake Michigan and the Mississippi, the Eastern and Western boundaries of the State; but, is very much nearer to the Southern than the Northern border of the State; so much indeed that when the Northern portion of the State comes to be set-

tled, seven-eighths of the population will probably be north of the capital.

From the top of Capital House Hotel, a fine view of the city and surrounding country is obtained. On two opposite sides lie small lakes, quite separate from one another. Beyond them, on the flat land, a mixture of wood-land and green crops is seen. On the other two sides, beyond the House, skeleton streets stretch a considerable distance. In almost every direction, the appearance of a lightly-wooded country, with partial cultivation, is presented. In one direction, there appears to be a considerable stretch of prairie. The highest ground on the site of the city is that already built upon. Judging by the eye, I should say it is about a mile and a-half from lake to lake. The capitol buildings are only partially constructed; and at present their progress is arrested. Only one wing has been built. The buildings of the University of Wisconsin, an Institution amply endowed by Congress, stand on the highest eminence of which the city can boast. There are some excellent buildings in the principal streets. The site of the city would seem to be equally healthy and beautiful; for there are no surrounding marshes on the small lakes.

LETTER II.

Madison to Prairie du Chien—Character of the Country—Railroads and Railroad Lands—Prairie du Chien—Price of uncultivated Land.

From Madison to Prairie du Chien, the Milwaukee and Missouri railroad passes nearly all the distance—about 100 miles—through a valley, which looks as if it had been the bed of a river, and which varies in width from one mile to three miles. This valley, now generally cultivated, was originally prairie; the soil is light and sandy, in most places, and at several points marshy spots occur. Each side of this valley rises like the bank of a river. These hills are generally covered with oak openings; and there is very little cultivation upon them, a circumstance for which the indifferent character of the land no doubt accounts. Even in the narrow valley, the proportion of land under crop was small. Wheat and oats were generally light; corn and potatoes looked well. The railroad crosses the Milwaukee river three times. The banks are wooded at the points of intersection by the railroad; a circumstance not peculiar to this locality or State; for where the most extensive prairies occur the rivers are fringed with woods. The railroad bridges are of wood, and some of them must be a third of a mile long.

The Milwaukee and Mississippi railroad was built for \$8,000 to \$10,000 a mile; and does not pay at that. Its stock, however, is worth more than that of Prairie La Crosse road, which crosses the state further North. Ex-

traordinary frauds were perpetrated in connection with this last road; a large number of the members of the Legislature having been convicted before a committee of investigation of having taken heavy bribes of stock to vote a grant of land, which Congress had placed at the disposal of the State of Wisconsin, for railroad purposes. The then Governor also received \$50,000 of stock. I have heard the transaction stoutly defended by a plain farmer, who puts the case thus: 'The Governor, he alleges, vetoed a previous bill, in which the interests of the State were not sufficiently guarded; it not being made compulsory on the Company that they should perform the work for which they were to get the lands. When a new bill, containing these safeguards had been passed, it received the sanction of the Governor. After all was over, and, it is alleged, without any previous agreement or understanding on the subject, the Governor pocketed his \$50,000 of paid-up stock; or rather stock, fraudulently certified by the directors to have been paid up; and as such entitled to whatever dividend might be going. Such is the defence that I heard put forth of this transaction; the chief merit of the Governor consisting in the vetoing of the original bill, and the pretended harmlessness of the transaction in the alleged absence of any prior agreement regarding the amount he received. But the man who made this defence of a governor belonging to his own party, admitted that he had refused to vote for him afterwards. No less than \$4,000,000 was charged to "discount and "commission;" and one of the late directors, Mr. JOHN

McGREGOR, has published a statement that of the whole ten millions of stock, for which certificates were issued, there was not two hundred thousand dollars in full cash stock. A sale of some of this stock was recently made in New York for 75 cents on the hundred dollars; and Mr. McGREGOR says he considers it dear. I conversed with an original stockholder of the Milwaukee and Mississippi Railroad; and he said he was glad to sell out for 30 cents on the dollar; far more than the stock afterwards fetched. This road was built without the aid of any public lands; and if it is a bad bargain for the stockholders, it is a great convenience to the public. So great was the necessity of the Prairie La Crosse road felt to be, that many of the farmers subscribed stock to a considerable amount, and mortgaged their farms in order to enable them to give collateral security for the notes they gave in payment. Before this road was built, the exportation of produce from several points on the line was almost, if not altogether impossible.

At one place, on the way, we passed about a hundred head of cattle, all grazing together. When we had passed the drift formation and got among the stratified rocks, the latter occasionally peeped out above the surface of the neighboring hills. Wherever the sand was light there was a liberal supply of dust in the cars. At half-past three o'clock, when we came to one of the way stations, an official shouted "twenty minutes for supper;" and those going north had previously been informed by handbill that they would get no supper on the Mississippi boat. We started a covey of prairie fowl, on the

track ; they did not take the trouble to shift their position more than about 15 yards. These birds sell for about a quarter dollar a brace, in Minnesota; at least a banker resident there so informed me.

The houses across the entire state, from Milwaukee to Mississippi, are of wood. There are but few log houses; they are almost exclusively frame.

Prairie du Chien is situated at the confluence of the Wisconsin and the Mississippi. The situation is flat; and viewed from the railroad station, it has a most forbidding look; Prairie du Chien early became the site of a French settlement. A village has existed here about 150 years; and when the railroad was open there were about 1,000 settlers, descendants of the French half-breeds, with now and then an admixture of Negro blood. Within about three years, the population is said to have increased from 1,000 to 5,000; its progress met a severe check in the universal collapse of 1857. The inhabitants are hopeful of its future; its site being, in their estimation, one of the best on the river for a large city. The soil is a black sand, which dries in a few hours after rain. There are no side-walks—at least they extend but a very short distance; and even the main street does not appear to have been graded. “The city of “Prairie du Chien” has very imposing dimensions—on the map. The principal stores did not appear to be favored with the visits of two customers a day. Town lots, which were held at \$1,000 an acre, in 1857, and situated in a remote situation under the bluffs, are now unsaleable at any price. A hotel, built two years

ago, in the south part of the "city," is still untenanted and unfurnished; the hotel accommodation already existing being quite sufficient for the needs of the place; and the North threatening to carry off the palm of victory in its rivalry with the South. Billiard saloons exist, if they do not flourish; and each hotel must keep a couple of billiard tables. Of the French population of the place, I am told a portion are the descendants of Canadians who went there some sixty years ago. The admixture of Indian blood is sometimes strikingly apparent; in other cases, the Celtic element has been preserved in greater purity. They speak tolerable French; and seem to be of a lazy turn of habit; for I saw the same men loitering or lounging several times during the day. This class of persons, I was told, are content to cultivate three or four acres indifferently; they hunt, fish, and lead a lazy sort of life.

Some miles from Prairie du Chien, indifferent land, in a state of nature, is held at \$5 an acre.

LETTER III.

Up the Upper Mississippi—Moonlight Scene—Disastrous effects of Land Speculation—Scenery—Diminished movement of Population to the West—Lumber down the Mississippi—St. Paul—Decrease of Population and decline of Property—State of the Currency—Proposed Repudiation—Lynch Law—Extraordinary instances of the decline in the value of Property—Minne-Ha-Ha—Paper Cities—Squatters without Rights—Money Laws—Universality of Land Speculation—Extreme Cold—Absence of Fruit.

At a point so far from its mouth, it would be unreasonable to expect much of the Mississippi. And in point of fact, its dimensions do not impose upon you. It seems to be about the size of the Rhone, just below Lyons. The bluffs, which are covered with thin wood, do not rise to the dignity of mountains, on either side; and only on the west do they extend close to the water. Multifarious and fantastically shaped islands, covered with vegetation, present to the eye, from the deck of the steamer, the appearance of a series of small lakes. It was half-past seven o'clock when the steamer *Key City*—so called on account of the position which Dubuque is supposed to hold—left the levée, at Prairie du Chien, for St. Paul. Like all the Mississippi boats, she draws an incredibly small amount of water—only two feet—and though 120 feet long, and capable of giving beds to 250 passengers, some of whom would fail to get state rooms, she is by no means comparable to the North River boats. The weather was cold; and few of the passengers remained on deck after dark. Some of them played at cards, in the saloon, where notices were posted that all games for money were strictly prohibited. They

seemed to do the next nearest thing, and play for drink; at least they occasionally had drink sent from the bar to the table on which the game was going on. The reflection of the moon produced a magnificent effect. The trees upon the islands by which we passed were seen more clearly in the reflection than on the surface. When the distance between the islands and the boat was increased, the submarine perspective was also increased; the nearest trees were seen in their full proportions; while of those more distant only the upper portions came into view; till at the outer range of vision only the extreme tops could be seen. The gliding stream formed a moving mirror, not the less true on account of the motion of its surface; and the reflection of the clouds, moving in an opposite direction, formed a charming assemblage of rare beauties.

DE SOTA has taken his position in American geography with the lucky speculators, who fabricate Jonesvilles, and been permitted to give his name to a village on the eastern banks of the river which he discovered; as HENNIPEN has given his to a County in Minnesota, and LA SALLE to a town, in Illinois. From the neighborhood of De Sota, Illinois, there was on board a farmer, with whom I conversed; and who gave a discouraging picture of the present state of affairs in the neighborhood in which he lives. Cultivated lands, he says, range from \$10 to \$20 an acre; uncultivated from \$5 to \$10. Four years ago, there was a great rush of emigration from the Eastern States; and everybody grasped at all the land he could get, with the in-

tention of keeping what he could cultivate, and the hope, now found to be delusive, of selling the remainder at a handsome profit. Industry was almost entirely forgotten, in the distracting fever of speculation. But where all were speculative buyers, it must inevitably follow that there must be a lack of purchasers at the augmented rates which had been dreamed of, and which caused men to consider themselves rich. The comparative suspension of industry left the speculative community without those products which labor only can give; there was next to nothing to be exchanged for money; and speculative purchasers and equally speculative pre-emptions became a drug in the market. Everybody had more land than he could use; and the once-expected cash customers, at advanced rates, came not. A collapse came instead; and the bubble of speculation having burst, the spirits of the speculators failed them. Some returned to the East, to labor honestly for that money which they now saw no other means of obtaining; some to remain; others to return when they should have earned the means of establishing themselves on land, in the West. The person from whom I derived this information said he had known ague to prevail at De Sota, some years ago, to such an extent that there were not healthy persons enough to take proper care of the sick.

During the night a fog somewhat impeded our progress; and the next day brought new scenes of natural beauty. The west bank of the river furnishes the greater part of the way to St. Paul, the chief points

of attraction. The bluffs, which are generally higher than on the other side, only here and there leave a narrow border of flat land, on the immediate edge of the river; on which there is occasionally either cultivation or the nucleus of a "city." At some points, the limestone rock, which is hardly ever out of position, presents a perpendicular face; of which the base is about half way up the bluff; the top often rising to within a few feet of the surface. These rocky exposures put on such a variety of shapes, that with a slight assistance from the imagination they may be converted into ruined castles, defiant towers, and other works of art. Below the base of the rock, the great declivity is adorned with a sprinkling of trees and green grass which, in the absence of underbrush, gives the bluffs, on which not a house is to be seen, the appearance of an old cultivated country. The bluffs, so far from presenting a continuous and unbroken line of equal eminence, are cut into a variety of figures: the round top, the frequent gorge, the variation of elevation, and the occasionally receding front; partially exposed rocks here, their absence there; conical hills; a sufficient sprinkling of trees to prevent the eye from being offended by a sterile baldness: such are the elements of scenery which is beautiful without being sublime, and interesting without being tame.

But while the bluffs are unsettled, portions of the interior table lands are generally taken up a considerable distance from the river. Many of them throughout the whole western country are held by absentee speculators, who reside in the old settled States, and who hope to

make a good profit out of the operation. At many points, I am told, all the valuable lands have been taken up for a distance of fifty miles from the river.

There are no wharves on the Upper Mississippi. The boats land by running upon the shallow beach and throwing out a plank to make a connection with the shore. This running aground is a constant habit of a Mississippi boat. No damage is feared from the operation, and none done by it. A few strokes of the engine are sometimes made before the boat parts company with the shallow beach; during which the engine seems to sigh laboriously and the boat to undergo a certain amount of strain.

On looking at the passengers, one is tempted to ask, where are the European emigrants? Although the boat was crowded, there was not a single European emigrant on board. Hardly any have arrived here this year, and very few last. Indeed, it is surprising how great a proportion of the population in these new States is composed of native Americans. They are the pioneers; the European emigrants follow.

The interior settlements cause towns to rise on the banks of the river, as outlets for produce. They are as yet all in their infancy.

Some idea of the quantity of timber rafted down the Mississippi may be obtained from the fact that we passed thirteen rafts of timber, besides a quantity of lumber, in the space of ten hours. A St. Louis lumber merchant, who was on board, estimated the amount at between 5,000,000 and 6,000,000 feet of lumber.

Each raft carried about twenty men, who steered by means of as many oars fastened on pivots, ten at each end of the raft. The annual amount of pine lumber got out in Wisconsin is estimated at

Black River.....	15,000,000 feet.
Chippewa	50,000,000 "
Green Bay.....	21,000,000 "
Manitowac.....	24,000,000 "
St. Croix	35,000,000 "
Wisconsin.....	80,000,000 "
Wolf River.....	25,000,000 "

Total,.....250,000,000 "

The northern part of Minnesota also contains a large pine region, which is almost entirely undeveloped.

St. Paul is the head of that great stretch of Mississippi navigation which leads to the Gulf of Mexico. It is situated on the east side of the river, the St. Croix river, some miles below, being the boundary line between Wisconsin and Minnesota. The bluffs, at the foot of which it is situated, recede sufficiently to allow a margin for the site of a city; and they are not so high at this point, but the city might, if necessity required it, ascend them. Of ten years' growth, St. Paul boasts a population of some 16,000 inhabitants; though instead of having increased she is said to have lost 3,000 inhabitants during the last two years. The majority of the buildings are of wood, though there are some of brick and some of stone. The latter is of a dirty grey, with a strong tendency to stain with red. The largest build

ing is a hotel—the Fuller House—built of brick, when labor and material were at the highest point, at a cost of \$60,000. It could now be built for less than half that sum. Nor does this represent the full extent of the collapse. I was shewn a lot of thirty feet frontage, for which \$10,000 cash was refused, in 1857, and which, with the enormous taxes upon it, could hardly be given away to-day, much less, sold at any price. Still things have not altogether reached their natural level. Twice as much rent is asked for houses as they would bring in the city of New York; and although it is sometimes promised, it is seldom paid.

Money was extremely scarce and trade dull; the notes of three of the banks were under protest, and the auditor would proceed to redeem them by the sale of securities in his hands. The notes of none of the banks of the State can be converted into cash, except at a discount of from two and a half to five per cent. Resolutions in favor of repudiating the \$5,000,000 voted in aid of railroads had been passed in some counties of the State.

The beef and mutton consumed here are imported from other States, the home production not yet being sufficient; a temporary evil which the stock now being produced will cure.

A bridge across the Mississippi has just been completed, at a cost of \$165,000. It was built by a private company, to which the city lent its credit to the amount of \$50,000. It has nine spans; the abutments are of solid stone; and the roadway is ninety-six feet above the water.

I called at the office of the Express Company and enquired about the new stage route to the Red River. The road is said to be good ; and the stages among the best in the Union. But these statements, it must be borne in mind, come from interested parties. They had had from seven to nine passengers for the trip. The distance to Fort Garry, by stages and steamer, is made in seven days ; and it is expected, with what reason I cannot tell, that it will be made in five next season. The people of St. Paul expect great things from the Red River country. Every body who has seen it describes the soil as far superior to anything to be found in Minnesota ; and there is a pretty general belief that when emigration from the east revives it will push on to Red River. The fare from St. Paul to Pembina is \$35. The Stages run to Brackenridge, north of the Sheyenne River ; and from that point the steamer runs to Fort Garry. There was another venture in the same direction, but it failed, temporarily at least. A steamer ascended the Minnesota or St. Peter's River, a branch of the Mississippi, in the expectation of being able to get into Big Stone Lake, which is divided by a tongue of land only half a mile wide from the head waters of the Red River. Machinery for carrying her over this portage, in pieces, was taken up ; but she was arrested on her progress about eight miles before she got into Big Stone Lake, having passed through Lac qui Parle. It was expected that, by the aid of the high water, she would be got over ; but being too late in the season, she

had to lie up for the high waters of next spring, when the experiment will be renewed.

Pleasure parties to Fort Garry, and even beyond, are being organized for next year. I met with an ex-Senator, who has arranged to go out with a party of ten ladies, and as many gentlemen, next year. They have not decided whether to take the St. Paul or the Fort William route. If the latter be taken, the ladies will have to be left at Fort William.

I went up to the State House, in St. Paul, a plain, inexpensive brick building, and found everything in a state of military excitement. The Secretary of State is a German, whose tongue at once betrays his origin. He explained the cause of the bustle and excitement of the military preparations. A little over fifty miles up the river, a lawless band of ninety-three men were setting all authority at defiance; the Sheriff of the County being one of the number. The difficulty was this: A man was found murdered; and his neighbor, who held the next "claim," was arrested and tried for the crime. Being acquitted by the jury, he was seized by a gang of ruffians, the Sheriff assisting, and hanged in the presence of his wife. One of the ringleaders was arrested; but was rescued by his associates, ninety-two in number, who were sworn to sacrifice their lives if necessary to prevent the arrest of any one of them. The militia were being sent up to bring them to their senses. The Secretary of State informed me that this was the third time the law had been set at defiance in a similar way. Pioneer life in Minnesota must be a pleasant thing!

It is usual to look upon St. Paul as the extreme point to which settlement has extended in the north-western portion of the United States; but no greater mistake could be made. There are settlements a hundred miles further up; and a steamboat runs on the Minnesota or St. Peter's River, a branch of the Mississippi, 446 miles above St. Paul, to Yellow Medicine. Around St. Paul, in the direction of Minne-Ha-Ha and St. Anthony's Falls, there are scarcely any signs of a new country. There is hardly any thing to remind you that the country has not been settled for centuries. There are no stumps of trees, no wounded woods in which the great gash has not left time for the foliage to grow down as a curtain to the side, no zig-zag fences, no log huts; but fine cultivated fields with such a sprinkling of trees as makes the landscape beautiful. Owing to the absence of heavy timber, the country assumes the appearance of an old settlement almost as soon as it is cultivated. We find here and there lots on which no improvement has been made—the sure indication of absentee proprietorship—and on which, instead of prairie grass, nothing but weeds are to be seen. But cultivation is the rule; droves of milch-cows, containing over one hundred each, are met; of which the milk is sold in St. Paul, for four cents a quart. But there are indications that the soil will yield only light crops. It is a sort of black sand, with a mixture of vegetable mould, extending to a depth of three or four feet; if what I saw where some men were making a road may be taken as a fair specimen. The presence of sand

in large quantities is generally apparent on the surface. I examined some wheat in the shock; and found it very poor indeed. The ears did not contain over twenty-six grains each; and the wheat was small and indifferent. The Indian corn looked well; and some extensive fields of oats seemed to promise a good yield.

Everywhere you hear the same story regarding the collapse of the speculative mania of 1857. Take for instance, the Fort Snelling purchase, regarding the corruption of which so much has been said. This Fort, having fallen into disuse from the removal of the Indians some hundreds of miles further in the direction of the setting sun, it was determined by the United States Government to bring it to the hammer, along with the reserve of some thousands of acres in the vicinity. It was accordingly sold in 1857; but it was alleged that the sale was managed in such a way as to prevent competition. Thus, continued the charge of corruption, a property worth half a million of dollars went into the hands of a few scheming speculators for the merely nominal sum of \$90,000. Of the purchase money \$30,000 was paid down; and it is generally understood it will be the last payment; for within these two years not a house has gone up, and there is no appearance of the least improvement taking place. The whole concern could not now be sold for the amount of the original instalment. It is situated at the confluence of two important rivers; but of one of these the navigation is obstructed a few miles higher up, by the Falls of St Anthony, and St. Paul arrests the business below.

General W——, an ex-United States Senator, who is an extensive owner of land in St. Paul and other parts of the Northwest, told me that he had lost half a million of dollars by not selling at the right time; he had been offered something like that figure for some 20 acres in St. Paul, for which, he says, he could not now get \$5,000: one hundredth part of what he could once have obtained!

Another effect of the collapse of 1857 is to be seen in the diminished number of passengers on the Upper Mississippi. There is now scarcely one boat where there were ten, a few years ago. Nor is this diminution due to railroad competition, for it does not exist: there is not that movement of people which existed a few years ago. The emigration from the Eastern States has been arrested: many have gone back, and speculators no longer throng the land offices in crowds for the purpose of securing "locations." Many, perhaps most of them, would be glad to get rid of their operations without loss.

The falls of Minnie-Ha-Ha are well named laughing water. As they are approached, their laugh is heard, full and hearty, for some distance. They are first seen from below; and the clear white sheet seems, in its downward progress, to roll with eternal perpetuity; for they appear as the segment of a moving circle in rapid and continuous motion. The height of all the falls may be some sixty feet. The channel through which they glide, just before leaping, seems to be about twenty feet wide. It is so worn that the top of the waters is about

three feet lower than the dry portion of the river bed at its side. The water, thus conducted, forms a single and unbroken sheet in its fall as compact as well can be. The waters below are about thirty-three feet wide. The "woodlands" among which the waters "laugh and leap" consist of shrubs, which grow directly up to the sides and slightly overhang the waters before they leap. Below the falls are larger trees which, at a turn in the river, some thirty yards from the precipice, form an arch by the meeting of their branches. The falls are white as snow, except a strip in the centre which has a yellowish tinge, probably derived from the greater depth of the channel at that point. A few yards below the falls, a rainbow adds the brilliancy of its hues to enhance the beauty of the scene. Above the falls, the river is shallow, and its reedy banks give it an uninteresting appearance. There are no "woodlands" except the curtain of trees that protects the "laughing waters" at the edge of the river. There is no house at the falls of Minne-Ha-Ha, except a rustic dwelling of the shanty species, in which cooling drinks and lager beer are dispensed to the thirsty pilgrims who visit the spot made classic by the genius of LONGFELLOW.

The general opinion in the West appears to be, that the next great rush of emigration will be to the Red River of the North. It matters not that there are millions and millions of acres unsettled in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska and other States and Territories of the Union: the adventurous Yankee will not be satisfied to confine himself to any

of these places. Most of those who went this year went to "locate" cities; and as a natural result we may expect to hear of corner lots selling, on Red River, at almost any conceivable price, within a few years. The Americans, to do them justice, have an astonishing facility of making cities—especially upon paper. I observe, for instance, that there is a joint stock city-making company, in Minnesota, called the "Dacotah Land Company." No sooner do the Indians surrender a tract of land than this Company sends parties to explore for the sites of future cities, and to take such steps as they can for securing the locations they may pitch upon. This, however, is a ticklish business; for in the United States, even the squatter, who desires to become a *bonâ fide* settler, and to improve and finally purchase the lot he has set himself down upon, is not assured of any sort of protection whatever, unless he has money. For instance, the Government was about to bring a large quantity of lands into the market, in Minnesota. All these lands, whether squatted on or not, must be offered for sale by public auction; and as many of the squatters are unfortunately without the means of purchasing, they have to risk the loss of their improvements. If the land on which they have squatted had not been brought into the market for some years later, as they doubtless expected would be the case, they might have been able to purchase. Nobody will give them any thing for their improvements; for the simple reason that they have no rights, which the law recognizes, to transfer; while the improvements they have made on

their lots offer a temptation to purchasers. Squatting, it must be borne in mind, is something very different from taking steps to secure a pre-emption claim. The former relates to lands not yet in the market, and which will be offered at auction and sold to the highest bidder, without the slightest regard to what the squatter may have done. A pre-emption claim can only be established in respect to lands already in the market. The public sales of land to take place in Minnesota, last Autumn, it was feared, would play sad havoc with the squatters.

Reapers had found their way in considerable numbers into Minnesota; and almost at every landing place agricultural implements had been put ashore.

In Minnesota there is no limitation to the rate of interests which may be charged, with the exception of the chartered banks, and they are confined to fifteen per cent. From three to five per cent. a month, sometime ago, constituted the prevailing rates; but both were oftener promised than paid.

Everywhere the valuable lands, which lie within easy reach of market, have been clutched by speculators living in the Eastern States; and they are frequently held at prices nearly or quite as high as the owners of improved farms are obliged, under pressure of circumstances, to sell them for. For instance, I met in St. Paul a person whose brother had just purchased for \$6 an acre, a quarter section (one hundred and sixty acres) fifty miles up the Minnesota River; and I was informed by an intelligent person, who combines farming with lumbering, that in the neighbourhood of Stilwater, on the

St. Croix where he lives—a much more accessible and desirable situation than fifty miles up the Minnesota river—improved farms can be purchased at from \$6 to \$10 an acre. The extent of improvement will range from forty to seventy-five acres out of the 160. The same gentleman assured me that the thermometer has been known to sink as low as 40° below zero; and in Iowa, a banker, who resides seventeen miles west of Lansing, told me that he had known the temperature to sink to 32° below zero. A gentleman from the neighborhood of Kankakee, Illinois, who formerly lived in Lower Canada, said he had felt the influence of the cold on the Prairies of Northern Illinois far more severely than he ever felt it at Quebec.

There is scarcely a particle of fruit of any description grown in Minnesota. This may be owing partly to the newness of the settlement; but in some cases there are more potent reasons. The bark of the apple tree, when it has been shone upon by the sun, in March, and the sap gone up, is found to burst under the influence of the violent change from the heat of the day to the cold of the night. Neither peaches nor plums are grown there. It is a fact, however, that cucumbers, potatoes, and corn ripen earlier at St. Paul than in Northern Illinois. A gentleman who left the latter place during the summer, was astonished to find at St. Paul every one of these articles; while none of them had been ripe in Illinois when he left.

LETTER IV.

Down the Mississippi—Wisconsin—Woodland and Prairie—Errors of Settlers—Wages of Labor—Tendency to go further West—Southerners and Social Aristocracy—From Fever River to Burlington—Small Accidents—Decrease of the Urban Population—Davenport and Dubuque—Hard Times—Experience of Illinois Farming—Disastrous Results of mad Speculation—Mosquitoes—"Superior Education" in the West.

I left St. Paul in the *Northern Light* about half-past eleven o'clock, on Sunday; and arrived at Galena, Illinois, a distance of over 430 miles, a little past-five o'clock next evening. In the night, we stuck on a beach for some time; but this is considered of no account here. About one o'clock, a derangement of the machinery was announced by a noise precisely similar to that occasioned by a horse stamping on a wooden floor. The difficulty was occasioned by a derangement of the small engine that supplies the boiler with water. For some time, the fires had to be kept down; but in a short time, by dint of hammering and "fixing," the "doctor" was restored to his usual condition. At Cassville, we ran upon the *Key City*, and carried away five of her stays and a part of the upper deck; the *Northern Light* receiving about an equal amount of damage. To finish our list of small accidents, we fell in with a raft of timber, in the mouth of the Fever River, on which Galena is situated; and creeping gently near the shore to which it was fastened, we ran over the rope with as little violence as possible. The result was that we divided the raft in the centre; and left it at full liberty to make the best of its way down the Mississippi, in any

shape that might best be agreed upon by the waters down which it had to float.

This may be a convenient place to state some additional facts regarding Wisconsin. At least three-fourths of all the wheat grown in that State is Spring wheat. New wheat was selling in the interior of the State at from fifty-five to sixty-five cents a bushel; the winter wheat bringing the greater price. A settler who lives forty miles west of Madison, and nine miles north of the Milwaukee and Mississippi Railroad, told me that an average of twenty-five bushels an acre was expected in his neighborhood. In that neighborhood—on the Bariboo River—he says improved land is worth from \$5 to \$25 an acre; and unimproved from \$4 to \$10. On one side of the river is heavily timbered land; on the other prairie. The timbered lands are the stronger and the better. It is on them principally that the fall wheat is grown; they will produce of it one-third more than prairie land. Indian corn grows stronger and yields better on wood than on prairie land. The latter description will not bear as many successive crops without manure as wood land. The wood lands can be cleared for \$10 per acre; the person contracting to clear having a right to do what he likes with the wood. It is sometimes sold on the ground for \$5 to \$6 an acre. Oak rails for fencing, twelve-feet long, sell for \$10 a 1000. It is usual to make a rail fence seven rails high. Settlers from the Eastern States almost always prefer wood to prairie land: they generally purchase farms partly improved. In their purchases, however, I was

told they are not always prudent. They grasp at too much ; laying out nearly all their money on land, and then going into debt for the means of working a part of it, while the balance is a burthen and an incubus. When they get into this position they pay from 25 to 50 per cent. for money, in spite of the Usury Law. A settler told me of a neighbor of his who had been paying 45 per cent., for two years, for the loan of money. The natural result is that his place was to be sold by the Sheriff last fall. A mortgage can be foreclosed in six months, unless unusual obstacles intervene; the cost of the operation being from \$50 to \$75. Vast quantities of land, in Wisconsin is held by the Eastern speculators, whose operations, I was assured by a person who has lived in the State fourteen years, form the greatest drawback to material progress.

Laboring men can be hired for from \$10 to \$12 a month, the year round; and during the harvest, when hired specially for harvesting, they were getting only a dollar a day. Joiners and carpenters get \$1.50 a day; blacksmiths \$1. The farmers generally were allured into investments, which do not pay them, some two years ago, and most of them are in debt. Old country-men, who have been bred farmers, generally act more prudently. They buy no more land than they can cultivate; they thus keep clear of debt and forty per cent. usurers. How much misery would be saved by the simple principle of political economy, that all the land which a man cannot cultivate to advantage is a burthen instead of a blessing, were it generally understood and acted upon!

Even from Wisconsin there is a constant stream of emigration to the further west. Kansas and Missouri have fallen into disfavor, they are unhealthy; and Minnesota and Pike's Peak had become the chief points of attraction. Property had depreciated considerably all over the State, within the last two years: some persons think as much as one-third. In Madison, a city of 10,000 or 11,000 inhabitants, there are stores under rent—the contract having been made some two years ago—at \$1,000 a year each; and in Milwaukee two story private dwelling houses were pointed out to me, which were still under rent at \$1,000 each; though they would not now bring over \$600. Everywhere people seem to have been disappointed in what they expected railroads to do for them. The highest price at which any lots have ever been sold in Madison is \$150 a foot.

There is a considerable sprinkling of Southerners, in one part of Wisconsin. Planters from Virginia, South Carolina and other States, come here and purchase considerable quantities of land. There are several of them in the neighborhood of the Bariboo River. Some of them remain only through the summer, when their old plantations are too unhealthy to live upon. I have heard complaints of the social inequality they introduce; not being able to shake off the imperious manners of the slave-owner. A person who once lived in Canada and who has been several years in this State assured me that he feels keenly the deprivation of the social equality which he enjoyed in Canada; the rich planters who

come into this State forming an exclusive society and looking down upon all who have the misfortune to be poor. Such of the Eastern settlers here as happen to have long purses, he says, display something of the same feeling; and he complains of the contempt with which this social aristocracy, as he calls it, look upon all who are poorer than themselves. The Southerners, as well as the Easterners, speculate to a considerable extent in lands. When the land limitation law was in force, means of evading it were not wanting; but now there is nothing in the shape of a legal check upon land speculation.

The bluffs of the Mississippi below Prairie du Chien are less beautiful than those between Prairie la Crosse and Lake Pepin. They have generally a less finished appearance; look less as if they had been cultivated for centuries, and more like what they are. They are often more heavily wooded; more rugged and less smoothed and rounded.

Galena is a neat little City, situated on the banks of the Fever River, about nine miles from its junction with the Mississippi. The business part of the City is confined to a single street, which runs along the water's edge, and at the foot of the bluff. The buildings, of red brick, are good; and the whole city looks as if it was of natural growth; as if the houses had been built because they had been required and not for speculative purposes. Behind this street, which winds with the curvature of the river, and on another terrace, but still below the top of the bluff, is a street of very pretty private residences.

I was quite pleased with this city of lead, which claims a population of from 12,000 to 15,000. Near the river lead is piled up like cord-wood; but as it is taken away almost daily, no large quantities are allowed to remain.

Resuming the voyage down the Mississippi, we passed no towns of importance, before arriving at Davenport; and even that place, like every other in the West had suffered much from the effects of the late crisis. A gentleman who resides in Iowa—and who ought to be cautious in his statements, seeing that he is a clergyman—assured me that Davenport has lost between 4,000 and 5,000 people, and Dubuque from 3,000 to 4,000, in consequence of the crisis of 1857. Another clergyman, Rev. JOEL PARKER, of the Fourth Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York, says the amount of distress which exists in these Western States is utterly inconceivable. While at Dubuque, he was informed by a lawyer, whose name he mentioned, that one half of the population of the place had been reduced to actual want of the necessaries of life. And this was far from being confined to the class which had been considered poor. It included persons who lived in fine houses and who had previously been supposed to be far removed from the possibility of actual want. The lawyer told DR. PARKER a story in his own experience. His wife told him that they wanted flour, as the stock, not being like that of the widow of sacred history, had been exhausted. He replied that he did not know how it was to be managed; that he had no money, and without money no one would give flour. Away he started with heavy heart to attend

to his duties at Court; and while walking up the steps of the court-house he found a two dollar bill. The fact became known; and great was the wonder, for nobody could conceive who could have had so much money to lose!

Dr. Parker has a brother who has practical experience of Illinois farming; and the Rev. Gentleman himself is a partner in the agricultural operations carried on by his brother, at Watagon, in the northern part of the State. He gave me the following history of their agricultural experience: In 1850, they sowed 190 acres of wheat; all of which was winter killed. They then sowed part of the same land with Spring wheat, which did well. A tornado played sad havoc with the stacks; and a rain of four days following, the grain suffered great damage. After all, only 1,200 bushels of merchantable wheat was got from this second sowing; and the price obtained for it was only forty-five cents a bushel. The balance of 190 acres was planted with corn—some of it three times—and after all the entire product did not exceed fifty bushels. Next year, the greater part of the remainder of the farm—480 acres in all—was broken up, and twenty-eight acres of it sowed with Spring wheat and barley, which produced less than 100 bushels. In the same year, eighty acres of corn planted upon this farm, did not ripen at all, owing to the backwardness of the Spring, and in spite of a hot Summer. 100 hogs were bought and fattened on the unripe corn: of these the gross product was about \$700; leaving a profit of \$200 to \$300. Forty acres of grass

were almost entirely destroyed by the wet spring ; the seed being " blasted." In the same year, eleven acres of potatoes yielded pretty well ; 100 bushels were sold for \$25 : \$1.50 had been paid for the seed, which cost about three times as much as the product realized. This year, 200 acres of corn, forty-five of wheat, and seventy-five of barley all looked promising on the ground. Dr. Parker thinks the raising of stock the most profitable. Mules cost little to rear, and bring a good price, \$10 an acre was paid for the farm in question, in a wild state. It is situated near the Chicago and Quincy Railroad, Knox County. Ague occurs occasionally, though the Dr. thinks with less frequency than on Long Island Sound. The inhabitants frequently deny the existence of this disease ; probably from interested motives. As an example of the opposite kind of success to that already mentioned, Dr. Parker added that, at first his brother bought eighty acres for seventy cents an acre ; and the first crop paid for the land. The second crop was good ; and while it was on the ground the land was sold for \$2,500, the crop being reserved by the seller. With the money thus obtained, one of the three quarter sections of which the farm first mentioned consists was bought. Corn does better than wheat in Illinois—such is Dr. Parker's opinion—but, when late, it is liable to be damaged by frost.

The effects of the mad speculation of 1854-5-6 and part of 1857, are of the most terrific character. Thousands upon thousands have been reduced to beggary, and at the same time their energies have been paralyzed. Along

both banks of the river—in Illinois and Iowa—its disastrous effects are visible. Scores of “cities,” as they are called with an unintended irony that is now but too keenly felt, sprang into existence from 1854 to 1858; and here they remain the monuments of the avarice and folly of those engaged in getting them up. They were built entirely upon speculation; not because they were required, or that there were any means by which they could be supported. Thousands of persons from the Eastern States, who had got it into their heads that city-making constituted the royal road to opulence, went to Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and other Western States and Territories, determined to make themselves rich in the shortest possible time. They bought lots, built houses and set themselves down to await the coming of the golden age when the magical progress of things should constitute them millionaires. There was nothing for them to do—no sufficient settlements to give employment of any kind to the new “cities”—and so they did nothing. They must eat, however, and such of them as had a little means set to work to eat them up. They are anxious to sell out; but there are no buyers, and they are reluctantly chained to a spot which they would gladly quit; and with their energies destroyed, they are enduring all the miseries of enforced idleness. In none of these speculation cities are there the least signs of activity. Not a building is being erected; and the streets are as inactive and as lifeless as it is possible to conceive. It is difficult to say whether things are worse in Iowa or Illineis; but they are about as bad as possible in both. If there be any

difference, there is reason to suppose that it is not in favor of Illinois; where an enormous proportion of the population is crowded into villages, of which the existence only serves as a monument of the folly of extravagant speculation. Farmers who, during the time of war-prices, clutched at more land than they could possibly pay for, and got into debt to possess themselves of it, borrowed money at $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. a month in the winter of 1858-9, but the hope of being able to retrieve their fortunes by a means almost necessarily destructive, proved, in many cases, delusive.

A great deal is said about the facilities for superior education in the Western States; and as this is held out as an inducement for respectable emigrants to go there, it may be well to enquire, on what foundation the fact rests. In passing down the Mississippi, we had on board, three or four clergymen who met by chance. There was also the financial manager of an Iowa College; and the conversation turning on the value of honorary degrees conferred by some of the "one-horse" institutions of the West, as they are called in the current slang, some edifying facts were elicited. It appears that in all these Western States there are numbers of petty denominational colleges, with university powers, and I was glad to learn that their advocates have principle and piety enough to support them by voluntary contributions. One instance was mentioned of an individual having contributed \$100,000 towards the endowment of one of these institutions. None of them look to the State for support. The opinion of the educated class

seems to be that these petty institutions should never have been entrusted with university powers. The financial manager of one of the Iowa colleges, of which there are six or seven, told a very edifying story. A diploma conferring the degree of D. D. was forwarded to a preacher, accompanied with the hope that he would appreciate the honor, and hinting that in such cases, the recipient generally enclosed a \$10 bill, by way of acknowledgment. The newly dubbed D. D. had some doubts about the honor he had received; and spoke to some of his clerical brethren on the subject of the degrees of the said "one-horse"—such is the language of the narrator—College. He found that the first two with whom he conversed had received a similar honor with himself. Concealing from them, his own good luck, he determined to have a little fun—for Ministers of the Gospel sometimes relish a harmless joke as well as their neighbors—and so he wrote upon the back of the diploma a formal assignment of all his right and interest in the document; and despatched it to a friend of his—a real wag—whom he desired to comply with the conditions and send on the ten dollars to the institution. The unlucky diploma underwent several successive transfers; and when last heard of there was no room on the back to write any more. Another person told a story of a proposal of this kind having been previously made as a means of raising the wind; in which one of the parties appealed to and concerned in the decision had honesty enough to reply sarcastically that, if the degrees were to be sold, he should insist upon their being put up to auc-

tion. A graduate of one of these "one-horse" universities, situated in Wisconsin, who listened to the conversation afterwards, told me that the professors had been content to starve on \$600 a year; but he thought they now got something more. He also gave an illustration of the degrading subjection in which the professors are held in some of these institutions. The students complaining that the morning bell called them to their perfunctory prayers at an hour when they would rather be otherwise engaged, resolved to take effectual means to abate what they, in the wild and wicked irreverence of youth, considered a nuisance. They therefore stole the clapper of the bell; and when its place was supplied they stole the second. And now mark the result. In the next term, the hour for prayers was altered to suit the rebellious students. If the students have some little difficulty in getting their own way, they generally find that a threat to leave the college, in a body, produces the desired effect. Each institution considers it its chief mission to send forth as many graduates as possible; and those which let the students through most easily are most popular. The reason why so many of these petty institutions exist is, that students may find a royal road to college honors and degrees. One does it—lets the students through easily—and another has to do the same, or its chances of competition would be lost.

The mosquitoes along the Illinois boundary of speculation villages, are dreadful. At Galena, they were a terrible nuisance. I saw none up in the north; but

when we got down into Fever river, they mustered in full force, as if for a general attack on all and sundry. They were desperate with hunger; and what between their dismal singing and their keen bite, they prevent many strangers, in spite of mosquito curtains, from sleeping.

As we descend the "Father of Waters," the river becomes wider and the banks lower; losing much in beauty, and becoming low and commonplace.

At Davenport, I observed that, in the three prominent blocks, near the river, most of the stores or warehouses were untenanted. This city will, however, recover. It existed long before the speculative mania, and will survive it. But in the meantime, it was feeling severely the weight of the pressure. Like most of the cities on this part of the river, be they ever so small, it has its rival, on the opposite bank, in the shape of Rock Island. This latter place derives its name from an island close by, on which are seen the remains of what was once a frontier Indian fortification. The River is crossed by a bridge belonging to the Rock Island railroad, which connects with the Illinois Central. This bridge is an obstruction to the navigation and has been condemned. It has carried off from Davenport a portion of its trade.

LETTER V.

Iowa—Failure of the Wheat Crop in 1858 and its results—Uncultivated Lands held by Speculators—Different kinds of Grass—Indifferent Farming—Cattle, Sheep and Mules—Diseases of the West—Iowa and Illinois—Fatal effects of Ague, through congestive chills and other diseases which it superinduces—Burlington—Flight of Urban Population—Crops in Iowa.

The country on the line of railroad from Burlington to Fairfield, Iowa, is a cultivated prairie, the greater part of the distance; though there is some woodland on the line. The prairie is generally flat; and the soil appears to be pretty strong clay. The country through which the line runs is not, I am told, the best part of the State. The crops looked pretty well; though wheat was reported indifferent in some parts of the State. Here we are far enough South to get into the fruit region; but good orchards seem scarce. Indian corn, if properly cultivated, thrives well. Wheat was a total failure throughout the State of Iowa in 1858. The average yield, I was told, was not three bushels an acre; and what little there was, was not fit to make bread. This State had therefore been importing wheat for consumption during the year. The produce of the previous harvest was used for seed. A farmer who sowed ten bushels told me that he did not expect to reap fifty. The wheat crop was again reported a failure in many parts of the State. This arose from various causes; including a wet spring, rust, the chinch bug, and bad farming. Corn was a good crop, in some places, but not universally. One disadvantage of this crop is, that it is too heavy

an article for export ; it has to be consumed on the spot. As the result of the failure of the harvest of 1858, there had been great suffering in many parts of the State. Cattle and pigs died, in the previous winter, in great numbers, of sheer starvation ; and many of the farmers were themselves reduced to great extremities. This state of things was confined to particular localities. Some who were heavily in debt were pledging their corn to the storekeepers while it was in the field. Before the winter had well set in, they would be stripped bare of provisions ; and were destined to endure another hard winter. Much of the uncultivated land in Iowa, as elsewhere in the West, is in the hands of speculators ; and it is held at from \$5 to \$7 an acre. They are likely to get leave to hold it for sometime, however, for real estate cannot be disposed of at any price. In spite of the usury laws, which restrict the rate of interest to ten per cent., from three to five per cent per month had been the actual rates in the previous winter. There is a tendency in the urban population to decrease. As an instance, Knoxville, Marion county, is said to have been reduced from 3,000 to 1,900 within the last two years. Many of the mechanics who could get nothing to do in the villages have gone upon farms ; and one may easily conceive the disadvantages under which they must have done so, when it is taken into account that no less than \$1,500 is sufficient to give a man a fair start upon the prairie. You find everywhere some who prefer prairie to wood land, and others who prefer wood land to prairie ; the latter generally coming from hard-wood portions in other States.

The kinds of grass grown here are Timothy, Red Top, English Blue, Kentucky Blue, and Hungarian. The latter is a species of millet; and when allowed to run to seed will grow four feet high; if grown for grass, about three feet. It is said to yield sometimes three tons to the acre. Here some of the farmers are beginning to understand the value of manure; though in Minnesota they throw it into the Mississippi. Much of the farming appears to be very indifferent; Indian corn for instance having, in some places, been permitted to be choked with weeds for want of proper ploughing. Potatoes are said to do well if they get good fair treatment.

Stock farming is not carried on to any considerable extent; though there is one farmer of the name of CARR, in Marion County, who sent 110 head of cattle to New York, in the Spring; the lightest of which weighed 1,700 and the heaviest 2,400 lbs. He farms over 1,000 acres. There are sheep farms in the State, on which from 500 to 800 sheep are kept. The raising of mules is pursued to some extent; and these animals always procure a market at tolerably good prices.

At Mount Pleasant, a Lunatic Asylum, towards the construction of which \$110,000 has been appropriated, was pointed out.

Iowa claims several advantages over Illinois; the chief of which is greater salubrity of climate. But even here, the ague sometimes plays sad havoc. A gentleman from Keokuk told me that a man died there a few weeks ago from congestive chill; for it is in this form that the ague so often proves fatal, on the rank prairies.

Charles D. Witherell, M.D., of Knoxville, Marion County, Iowa, informed me that the number of deaths in the State of Illinois, where he had lived a long time, from malaria, is astonishing. He says that nearly all the diseases there are the effects of malaria. The prairie ague debilitates the system and renders it an easy prey for the conquest of other diseases. The typhoid which prevails results from malaria; and an ague subject not unfrequently dies of pneumonia (lung fever) in the Spring. Congestive chill is as sure to prove fatal on the third attack, as apoplexy. The congestion commences in the capillary vessels; and extending to the veins, causes the patient to present a blue appearance: the blood fails to return to the heart and death ensues. In some parts of Illinois, he says—and on this point his testimony is corroborated by that of another gentleman who was present at the conversation of which I am giving the result—the ague returns with as much regularity every year as the sun does every day. Farmers prepare to meet it: they do what they must before it comes; and prepare to bear the annual shake as best they may. The ague in Illinois, Dr. Witherell says, is frequently of such intensity as to prove fatal through the medium of congestive chill, pneumonia, typhoid or some other disease induced by the debility which it generates.

Burlington, with the single exception of Davenport, is the most important place on the Upper Mississippi, for a distance of over 550 miles. It is situated on ground which rises gently from the river; and is unlike most of the towns of the upper portion of the “father

of waters," which are situated on very low lands. Like all the other towns in the West, it has suffered severely from the prevailing commercial depression. During the last eighteen months or two years, its population is estimated to have decreased 4,000; no less than one-fourth of the whole. Many mechanics who left have gone South, where, owing to the absence of insane speculation from 1854 to 1857, a healthy state of things, commercially speaking, exists. On my return from Fairfield, I was told by a resident of Mount Pleasant that that village has undergone a considerable loss of population; and if more do not go, it is because they want the means. There was nobody coming from the Eastern States; and very few European emigrants. A few returned and disappointed emigrants from Kansas stop in Iowa; but on the whole, the State cannot just now be more than holding its own in respect of population. As the urban population decreases, the value of property decreases and rents come down. I was shown stores in Burlington, which, a few years ago, rented as high as \$1,200 each; and lots in the best business situation once fetched nearly \$500 a foot. One lot of thirty-feet frontage sold for \$13,000.

Opinions differ as to whether Iowa has produced more wheat this year, (1859), than will suffice for home consumption; and it may safely be assumed that the surplus will be small. Oats were of little value; having been severely injured by the rust. And though the corn crop was, upon the whole, good, many of the pigs and cattle to which it ought to have been fed, no longer exist;

having been carried off by starvation in the previous winter. The corn crop would have been still better but for the prevalence of wet weather preventing ploughing between the rows, and the consequent choking of the crop by weeds.

After my conversation with Dr. Witherell, I had an opportunity of conversing with another physician, a resident of Mount Pleasant, on the subject of the Prairie ague and its fatal effects. He fully confirmed what Dr. Witherell told me regarding the congestive chill. He went further, or rather added something additional, by way of explanation. He says he has known strong men, after only two or three days of prairie ague, to be seized with congestive chill; and such persons are just as likely to succumb under the paroxysm as the most emaciated. He confirms the statement that the third chill is always considered fatal; though he mentioned two cases in which he had been able to break the disease after the occurrence of two chills; one of a strong man suddenly attacked, and the other of a lady in a delicate situation. Ague, says this physician, is more general at present than last year, in consequence of the lowness of the Mississippi. The des Moines Valley he considers the greatest ague-breeder in Iowa; but in point of frequency and fatality, he, after practicing in three different States, regards Southern Illinois as worse than any other part of the Union. He is of opinion, however, that with the progress of settlement and the disappearance of decayed vegetable matter, the prairie ague will decrease, and in point of fact does decrease, under these circumstances.

Iowa possesses extensive coal fields. There are beds which crop out, and there are veins seven feet thick. The coal is worked for domestic purposes, thereby compensating to a certain extent for the absence of timber on the longer stretches of prairie.

LETTER VI.

Burlington, Iowa, to Mendota, Illinois—Flat Prairies and the absence of Streams—Why Corn Predominates—Fatal effects of the Rot in Sheep—Low estimated average of the Wheat Crop—Newly broken Prairie not always cropped the first year—Different kinds of Fence—Forced Sales of cultivated Farms—Generation of Malaria and fatal Diseases on the Prairies—Prairie Fowl—The Wheat Crop.

I left Burlington, Iowa, by the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad—first ferrying across the Mississippi—for Mendota, Illinois. The road, for some distance from the starting point, runs along side a swamp, on the margin of the river, four or five miles wide. The prairie, nearly all of which in the vicinity of the road is under cultivation and a large proportion of it was or had been under crop, this year, is little else than one continuous flat. Scarcely any rolling land occurs; and in the entire distance of 120 miles we did not cross more than one stream of any kind. The farmers depend for water upon two sources: what are called sloughs, which, with

very few exceptions, dry up at certain seasons, and wells. The water in the sloughs, however well it may serve the purposes of cattle, cannot be wholesome for man. The drinking of it is one of the causes of ague. I heard of a farmer who sold out an Illinois farm on account of the difficulty of obtaining good water. In this neighborhood it is readily procured by sinking wells. Clumps of trees occasionally occur; but with the exceptions of these, prairies may be found, in this State, hundreds of miles in extent.

Indian corn appeared to be the predominant crop; and in most instances it looked well. Winter wheat is found to be a precarious crop; and Spring wheat generally gives only a moderate yield. The temptation to grow corn is therefore obvious. But as the price of corn cannot be reckoned, one year with another, at over twenty-five to thirty-three cents a bushel, where it is grown, it is clear that its value would frequently be reduced below a paying point, by exporting it to any considerable distance; the exceptions would be in cases of higher prices. This state of thing begets a tendency to raise cattle and pigs. Profitable sheep farming is rare; the sheep requiring great attention. It existed in the infancy of the States, when, the land being nearly all common, an unlimited amount of grazing was to be had for nothing. I was told of a farmer, north of Mendota, who made large sums by sheep farming. He recently sold out his flock of 2,000; and it is not thought that his successor will be equally successful, seeing that the advantages of unlimited free common of prairie is no longer

obtainable in that neighbourhood. Sheep farming, my informant, a large farmer, said, depends very much for success upon the skill by which it is conducted. The rot, which was so fatal in the marshy parts of England before the introduction of draining, often makes terrible havoc among sheep, in this State. A farmer named Rankin, in Henderson County, lost one-hundred sheep from this cause, last winter. The rot is a disease against which the best preventive is drainage; and the drainage of flat prairies, through which there are no streams for outfalls, for scores of miles together, must be next to an impossibility. But other causes than wet tend to produce the rot in sheep; and of these the most prominent is exposure. Sheep farmers, who have been successful have provided for their flocks shelter from the cutting winds which sweep unbroken over the prairies, for hundreds of miles together. These consist of large sheds covered with grass, on as elevated a situation as the farm affords, whenever there is any difference of level; the covering of which has to be renewed every two years. Besides rot and foot-rot, there are other diseases to which sheep on these prairies are subject. They thus require an amount of care which is likely to cause the raising of cattle to be generally preferred, in Illinois, to that of sheep. There is a general belief too that Texas is the great sheep producing State of the Union: its climate assigns it nearly the same place, in this respect, as Australia occupies. There they are seldom produced singly: more frequently in twos and threes. Illinois cannot, for these reasons, hope, in the long-run, to compete with

Texas, in the raising of sheep. But she can turn her eorn into beef; and indeed this is about the only thing she can do with it; a fact which accounts for the existence of some considerable droves of eattle which we passed between the Mississippi and Medonta.

At least two-thirds of all the wheat grown in the section of the State through which we passed, is Spring wheat. Winter wheat is grown in Canada with success as far north-east as Belleville and even Kingston; and it is an important question how it comes that the northern part of Illinois, so much further south-west, is not better adapted for the production of winter wheat than the neighborhood of Belleville, Canada? The reason generally given, and I have no doubt it is the correct one, is, that the frequent thaws eause the grain to be exposed, and it suffers accordingly from the winter frosts. A farmer who lives fifteen miles east of the Mississippi, on the line of the Burlington and Quincy railroad, estimated the yield of wheat in that neighborhood at fifteen bushels an acre; some Spring wheat descending as low as ten, and some Fall rising as high as twenty-five. A farmer who lives fifteen miles west of Rock Island told me, that from ten aeres of Spring wheat he had obtained one hundred and ten bushels; and that all he had been offered for it was fifty cents a bushel. Another farmer who lives in the neighborhood of La Salle, and with whom I conversed on a Mississippi steamer some days previously, estimated the entire yield of wheat throughout the State of Illinois at ten bushels an acre. This low average he set down to the ravages

of the Chinch Bug. I have since learned that this insect frequently covers the stalks of both wheat and corn; paying its respects to the wheat first and afterwards going over to the corn for a dessert. Oats were rusted in some places; and it was thought that twenty-five bushels per acre would be a high average.

We passed some prairie, ploughed for the first time this summer, and not under crop. It is, I find, a mistake to suppose that prairie land is always cropped the first year it is broken. It is impossible that it should be; for the persons on whom the farmer depends for the breaking up of his land—who keep cattle and ploughs for that purpose—cannot be in two places at once; and the quantity of land which they could break between the opening of Spring and the time for sowing is necessarily limited. Some are therefore obliged to wait till it is too late for sowing to have their land broken up; and thus it results that about half the prairie land brought under cultivation bears no crop the first year. Nor is the “sod” crop, as the crop is called, which is put in the same year that the land is broken, generally equal to a crop put in the second year.

On the line of road we saw no less than four kinds of fences: post and board fence, worm rail fence, Osage Orange, and wire fence. The Osage Orange, when properly attended to, grows thick; and bristling with strong prickles, it makes a good, permanent and secure fence. But if it does not get the requisite attention, in the way of weeding and supplying the gaps with new plants where failures occur, it comes to nothing. I

saw proofs enough of this in the gaps that occurred in some of these hedges: in some places for rods together the hedge had disappeared. I was informed by a person who resides in the neighborhood of Kankakee that, in many parts of the State, the attempt to raise hedges had been given up as a failure. Persons went round proposing to contract for the planting of these hedges, and guaranteeing success, on certain conditions; which conditions, in case of failure, they have afterwards invariably alleged have not been fulfilled by the farmer. The wire fence is almost ridiculously simple in its contrivance. It consists of four wires, little if anything thicker than telegraph wires, stretched to posts, and occupying the place of boards. On the relative merits of wire, board and rail fences, there is much controversy. That the hedge is the best of all fences would seem hardly to be open to dispute; but to be raised successfully it requires much tender nursing and watchful care. One great advantage of the Osage Orange is, that cattle will not brouse it; while the English hawthorn requires to be fenced on both sides to prevent its destruction, by cattle and sheep, when its shoots are young and tender.

Farms, like houses, can generally be purchased in an improved state for less money than the land can be bought and the improvements can be made for. An instance of this came under my observation. A farmer, who resides near Rock Island, offered me eighty acres, of which seventy are under cultivation, with a house that cost \$1,500 and other buildings that cost \$400,—for \$2,500. He wanted to sell because he had

more land than he had the means to cultivate and pay for. In a month's time \$750 would be due—the last payment—on these eighty acres; and he would not be able to borrow the money, if at all, for less than two per cent a month. The figure at which he offered to sell is \$1,000 less than the property cost him.

The sloughs, before mentioned, produce malaria, in the process of drying up. Every body in Illinois, I found only too familiar with the reputation of the congestive chill and its certain fatality in the third paroxysm. A clergyman, who was lecturing at Mendota on "War and Prophecy," told me that he had known numerous instances of this disease. It is liable to occur at any season of the year; and the strongest are frequently cut off in a few days. A friend of his, who lived north of Mendota, was attacked with it in the previous November, one night after supper. He hurried to bed; but it was to the bed of death: he expired at the end of eight days. Owing to the great cost of constructing fences in a country destitute of timber, like the Illinois prairies, much of the wheat is stacked out of doors; where, not being thatched, it is liable to great injury from rain, and does, I am told, often receive injury. The Winter wheat was considerably injured by winter-killing: it was thin on the ground; but what there was of the grain was good. It has sometimes been attempted to protect Winter wheat by sowing it between rows of Indian corn; but I heard a farmer, who had tried that experiment without success, say he was tired of it, and had resolved to stick to Spring wheat in future.

On the cars from Burlington, there was a young man returning from Pike's Peak. He gave a terrible account of the state of things there. He said very few were making anything worth while; the great majority were not making nearly enough to subsist them; and numbers were dying every day of starvation. Flour was from \$20 to \$30 a bbl., which might not be a very serious matter if the diggings were prolific; but unfortunately the majority of the victims of this mania had nothing to buy it with. The returned miner left St. Joseph, on the 1st May and arrived at Denver City on the 4th July; travelling slowly in ox-carts. If he was as long coming back, he could not have been much over a week there. Another would-be gold hunter I saw on the ferry-boat, at Burlington, the same morning. He was a man reduced to the last extremity of exhaustion and weakness. He had to be almost literally carried on board; and when there, had to be laid at the foot of the cabin steps, with his head on a pillow, and his face fanned to give him a little breath. Yet, under whatever infatuation it may have been, that man was actually on his way to California!

Mendota is a railroad town, claiming 2,000 population, situated at the intersection of the Illinois Central Railway with the Chicago, Quincy and Burlington Railroad. It shows more signs of life than most western villages I have seen; though they are not of a very striking nature. The place is the growth of five years. Common lumber—a carpenter is my authority—sells here for \$16 a thousand, and seconds for \$30. House

carpenters get \$1 25 to \$1 50 a day. Butter sells at ten cents a lb.; eggs at eight cents a dozen; beef-stake at seven cents a lb. The local paper quoted corn at forty-five to fifty cents a bushel—a high figure, explained no doubt by the fact that the new crop was not yet ripe—and wheat at fifty to fifty-eight cents. From this point, however, it must be remarked, grain has very little distance, comparatively speaking, to be carried to Chicago. Here the country is a dead level, in all directions. The effect is anything but agreeable. You seem to be cramped up by the very extension of space, where there are no prominent objects on which the eye can fix. The vision is bounded by the flatness of the surface in this amplitude of space; for where the surface is level the eye cannot see any portion of it a great distance. The very fact of being level prevents that; and as to infinity of space, we can look towards the sky on any clear day, be we where we may. The effect of the prairie upon the vision is the reverse of that conceived by those who have not seen it; and where the land has been broken up, the effect is not agreeable.

I had given orders on the previous night to be called at four o'clock, in the morning, to drive into the country to shoot Prairie Chickens, and see the crops on the prairie. At that hour a damp fog covered the ground, in all directions. It was about five o'clock when we started. Driving about six miles, we tied the horse to a fence and set out; and having traversed one field with no other success than starting a couple of hens, at too

great a distance, among some corn, we drove about a mile further; and repeating the operation, we started about twenty-five birds altogether, and killed seven. Our pointers could stand it no longer; the heat being too great and there being no water to be had for them. We passed the dry bed of one small creek, which in spring becomes a running stream, and in summer dries up. Some of the sloughs through which we passed bore a crop of prairie grass, a little over knee height; but they had so dried up as to cause no inconvenience in walking through them. We passed over several prairies which had never been broken up; but they were grazed down. The resident farmers benefit by the inertness of speculators, who leave their prairies in common, and from which the grass is eaten by droves of cattle. I examined the wheat in shock, in several fields, and found that the best of it would not average over twenty-eight grains to the ear, and some did not exceed twenty. Some of it was passable Spring wheat; and some very poor. The yield could not be great.

LETTER VII.

Mendota to Sandoval—Predominance of Corn—The Grand Prairie—La Salle and its Vicinage—Rare occurrence of Running Streams—Western Railroads; the cause of their Cheapness—Richness of the Soil balanced by Drawbacks arising from the want of Wood and Water—Diseases on the Prairies—Fogs—Illinois Central Lands fourteen times as dear as those of the Canadian Government—Cost of Prairie Fencing, and the inconvenience to which it leads—Woodland vs. Prairie Farming—Trouble of getting Water—Unchecked winter winds on the Prairies.

From Mendota to Sandoval, we pass over the Grand Prairie—the prairie of prairies—which, for miles and miles still lies in a state of nature, though traversed by the Illinois Central Railway. But if much of it is still unbroken by the plough, there are also, at other points, large stretches of land under cultivation; and which bore, for the most part, crops of Indian Corn, which were generally reported to be good. There was one danger, however, through which they had to pass. The June frost threw them back for two or three weeks, and it was a question whether the corn would have so hardened before the autumn frosts came on as to make it secure from all injury from them. In Indiana, and even in portions of Illinois, it is not unusual to leave corn standing in the field all winter; and it is found that it receives no injury from the frost, provided it has been well ripened before the frosts commence. One cannot pass through Illinois, in summer, without seeing that corn is the staple crop. The quantity produced is about six times the quantity of wheat. From various causes, I am convinced that the average of the latter will be

low; and indeed it is highly improbable that it will ever be high. The seed sown was inferior; the wheat crop of last year being a very bad sample; and in the northern and middle part of the State, Spring wheat has chiefly to be relied upon; the danger from winter-killing, owing to the frequent absence of snow, being so great as to render winter wheat a very precarious crop. Even the corn crop was not universally good. A farmer who resides in the neighborhood of Dixon, told me that he knew several fields for which he would not give a dollar an acre. The Spring was too dry. In the neighborhood of Dixon, wheat was bringing (in August) only fifty cents a bushel.

At some points on the Grand Prairie, not a tree can be seen in any direction; and the natural prairie grass, is more or less grazed by cattle which roam over the common, and of which some large flocks are seen. The railroad fence, in these places, is the only one that exists. The general aspect of the prairie has little of the beautiful in it. The vegetation wears a rough appearance, occasioned by the presence of weedy looking herbs, which rise above the top of the grass. Occasionally a sprinkling of wild flowers, of various hues, occurs; but they are exceptional and do not form a predominant feature. Sometimes clumps of purple flowers are seen; then the scene is varied by a yellow bloom, and other hues intervene and commingle. But, as I have said, these are exceptional features of the wild prairie; the general and predominant characteristic being a rough grass overtopped by a broader-leaved vegetation, which has a

weedy appearance. Of the flowers one, not at all beautiful, of a yellow cast, which reminds you of the Laburnum, is most frequently met with. A purple flower of rare beauty is occasionally seen. It is five or six inches long, and grows upright and narrow. Of this flower Nature does not appear to have been lavish; for I did not see a large quantity of it together. In the absence of green trees and murmuring brooks, the prairie is little calculated to inspire the poet; and indeed a prairie poet would, I should imagine, be a singular being.

At La Salle, the Central Railroad crosses the Michigan Canal—which connects that town with Lake Michigan—and the Illinois river valley, by a single wooden bridge, which must be about three quarters of a mile long. The view from this bridge is very fine; but it would be more enjoyable from some other position than a wooden railroad bridge elevated some sixty or seventy feet in the air. The picture is, however, a pretty one. On one side is the town of La Salle, on the edge of the canal; then a tongue of bottom land which narrows at the point where the bridge crosses and spreads out in the receding distance, and presents a fine crop of Indian corn extending for about three miles. The opposite bank is covered with wood; and before it is a sort of broad terrace on which trees are agreeably scattered. On the other side of the bridge, "Starved Rock," a point of interest in Indian story is seen; but the valley was not under crop. The valley on the other side, is subject to periodical floods, which leave fever and ague in their train. La Salle is not making much progress; its

population containing a large foreign element of a kind with which Americans do not care to come in contact. La Salle is the heart of the coal country; the coal cropping out above the surface in various places. About forty miles above that point, Father Hennipen crossed; the first white man who set foot on this soil. Except the Illinois, we crossed nothing all the way from Mendota that can be called a river; not even a running stream.

The Central has a "ladies car," causing a sort of precise meeting-house-like separation of the sexes. The ladies, it must be supposed, are at liberty to take their natural protectors with them.

Any one who sees a railroad on a prairie; over which there is no expense for grading and no trees or stumps to remove, will cease to wonder at the cheapness of American railroads. But the foundation on which it is placed is very insecure, consisting of some three feet of soft muck. Rain loosens the ties and causes them to give way under the trains. The result is that though the cost of construction is small that of maintenance is great; and the latter being an annual expenditure it bears the relation that interest does to capital, and tends to eat up the earnings, and produce the extraordinary phenomena which is here witnessed; a country full of railroads, hardly one of which pays a dividend.

The bottom land of the Grand Prairie may boast a soil of undoubted fertility; but it is wanting in two most important elements of civilization—wood and water—the latter being also one of the first necessities

of existence. Not a tree is to be seen; not a stream occurs for hundreds of miles: not a drop of water is to be had but what the sloughs present; which is necessarily of the worst quality; and, besides, this source fails every year, leaving malaria behind; with the whole train of diseases of which malaria is the father: fever and ague, billious fever—which occurs in the fall—the terrible congestive chill, and what is called “winter fever,” being, according to some doctors, a compound of lung fever, billious affection and erysipelas. I met at Sandoval a man from the east who had had terrible experience of these classes of diseases. Twelve years ago, being somewhat feeble in health, he was travelling in the hope of obtaining relief by fresh air, in new scenes. It was in the fall of the year, when he arrived in this neighborhood; and he was attacked with billious fever, by which he was confined for an entire year, at the end of which time he was reduced to a mere skeleton. That, he said, accounted for his being here. The sickly season, he assured me, regularly recurs every fall, on the drying up of the waters, about the latter end of August or the beginning of September. Ague was formerly universal: it was the current opinion that no stranger could escape it. And whenever a large quantity of prairie is broken up, this disease assumes its former intensity. On the lowering or the drying up of the few rivers that occur—my informant only named two—the diseases which diffused malaria produces never fail to make their unwelcome appearance. One of the signs of the coming sickly season presented itself in the thick fog

which I mentioned as occurring at Tolono. At Sandoval, I witnessed a repetition of it, in a modified form; it was regarded as the sure precursor of disease. When fogs occur every night in succession, or every alternate night, for some time, the poisonous effects of malaria soon begin to develop themselves.

The lands of the Illinois Central Railroad Company are generally regarded along the line as being held at very extravagant prices; and if they wait for purchasers among those who know the value of wild land in the Western States, they will have to wait a long time. The Company was to get each alternate section along the line; but this was not always found practicable, as a portion of the lands had already gone into the hands of speculators. Both speculators and Company demand an extravagant price for lands in eligible situations. Up to the end of the year 1856, the company had sold 819,318 acres for \$10,033,486 54; which is about fourteen times as much as far more desirable government lands in Canada are sold for. Take them all in all—considering the absence of wood and water, the uncertainty of the climate, and the prevalence of malaria—I should say they are the least desirable lands in America for a settler to purchase.

The want of timber on these extensive prairies is severely felt by all who have been accustomed to have at their command an abundant supply for all purposes. I met only one man, who, with an experience of both hard-wood land and prairie, declared his preference for the latter; while I met numerous instances of the con-

trary. I had an interesting conversation with a farmer, who was born on timber land, in Indiana, and who coming into Illinois, settled on prairie land, near Dixon. He says that if a prairie farm be properly fenced—say, in addition to a ring-fence, be divided into twenty acre fields—it will cost about as much as it will to bring a wood-farm into cultivation; and I am satisfied that his statement can be shown to be correct from data furnished by the advocates of prairie over hard-wood farming. But as a matter of fact, the prairie farms, he assured me, are not generally fenced so that they can be worked to advantage. It frequently happens that the owners of a section of land—a mile square—combine to make a ring-fence, around the section; thus the four farms are held in common. Now every one who knows anything of farming in England, prior to the passage of the General Enclosure Act, is aware of the disadvantages of common fields even under the old fourfold system; but these disadvantages were as nothing compared to those which result from fencing farms in common, in Illinois. Under the fourfold system, a field of say 2,000 acres would only be cropped with grain every alternate year. Wheat would follow a dead fallow; as peas or beans would follow clover, or rye grass. Valuers determined the quantity of stock which each farmer interested was entitled to put into the field, in the year in which grain was not grown; and there were no crops to be injured by cattle or sheep. But look at prairie farming, in common. Four farms occupy a mile square. One farmer does not get his corn into the ground in

time to permit of its ripening early, or he is not able from sickness or other causes—and the time for gathering it is identical with the sickly season—to reap as soon as his neighbor. In that case one of two serious inconveniences must follow: either his neighbors' cattle—supposing them to be turned into the common field—will destroy his corn; or the fall grazing will be lost by the frost blasting vegetation before the corn is reaped. If a farmer has a ring-fence round his own quarter section, without a division of his farm into suitable fields, the same difficulties will occur, in a modified form. And if he fences as he ought to fence, I believe the old Indiana farmer is right in saying that the cost, with other expenses incidental to prairie farming, will equal that of clearing wood-land. Upon the whole, and after a trial of both, he said he would prefer wood-land. A prairie farm is more convenient to work than a wood farm for some years, owing to the absence of stumps; and other things being equal, it would for the same reason produce more grain; an acre of prairie land presenting a larger surface capable of bearing grain than an acre of wood-land covered with stumps. But where only spring wheat can be grown, the productive capacity of a country is not comparable to that of a country like Upper Canada; and thus the advantage of climate possessed by the latter, must be added to that of an abundance of water, in living streams, and timber. Where all the water that exists on a farm occurs in sloughs, which dry up in summer and leave malaria behind them; where there is no unfailing resource but wells, which have to be sunk from

twenty to thirty feet, and not unfrequently much lower, the disadvantage is so marked that a country so situated cannot be compared to one like Canada which abounds every where with living streams of pure water, from which malaria is not generated.

I met, in the railroad car, a young American from Knoxville, Knox Co., who was leaving Illinois on account of the unbearable cold of the unchecked winter winds, which all agree in describing as sweeping so remorselessly over the open prairies. Many persons told me that these winds seem to pierce through those exposed to them; the young man in question vowed last winter never again to expose himself to such discomfort, and he was carrying out his resolution, with the milder climate of Texas in his mind's eye, though not entirely decided as to what place he should try next. He told me that he was acquainted with several farmers from Indiana, who would gladly go back to the shelter of their wood-lands, did circumstances permit; but they had bought prairie farms and could not get rid of them. Some cases of congestive chill had already occurred in the neighborhood where he lived, before he left: there was one of a young lady, with whom he was acquainted, and who having had ague all the summer had had congestive chills before he left. A person who lives at Sandoval told me that this disease has been much heard of during the last seven or eight years; and is as well known as the "winter fever."

Some persons fall into the error of supposing that there are no mosquitoes on the prairies. All I can say

is that I found them too plentiful in several places; and I was told that they are by no means strangers to the prairies or the prairies to them.

LETTER VIII.

St. Louis—High price of Building Lots and High Rents—Price of Farming Lands in Missouri—Prevalent idea that Missouri will become a Free State—Projected Railroads to the Pacific Ocean—St. Louis to Springfield, Illinois—Springfield—Farming in the neighborhood—Ague and other Diseases—Springfield to Tolono—Newly broken Prairie not under Crop—Augmentation of the Interest on the Purchase Money of the Illinois Central R. R. Co's Lands.

From Sandoval I went by railroad to St. Louis, in the State of Missouri. St. Louis presented a remarkable contrast to every other place that I visited in the West. Instead of retrograding; instead of a decline of property and diminution of population, there was a steady advance: the value of real estate is constantly going up, and the pressure of the population upon the house room is so great that most extravagant rents are paid. Everything shewed a tendency to converge towards a few great centres; of which St. Louis may be accounted one. The effects of the crisis of 1857 were not visible at St. Louis. The difficulty was got over in a few months; and since then there had been an onward tendency which had known no check. This is said to

be owing to the solidity of the merchants, who do business on their own capital, and are comparatively little indebted for their position to eastern credit. But if there is no depression at St. Louis, it is not so certain that there is no inflation. Real estate on Fourth Street, the principal retail street, is said to be worth ten times as much as it was eight years ago. As high as \$7,500 a year is paid for at least one store; and the rents of private houses are almost fabulous. For instance, a two storied house, with attic and basement, cheaply constructed, on Thirteenth Street—counting from the river—rents for \$900 a year. The same house brought only \$250 seven years ago; since which time it has been constantly advancing in value. In the city, a dwelling house, into which the outer door enters directly into one of the rooms, will bring \$300. This is a style of house which is, in the language of the place, unfit for any “white man” to live in. For anything like a decent house \$600 must be paid. In 1858, the quantity of real estate that changed hands, in the city, at enormous prices, was unprecedented. If this be not inflation, it looks very like it, but no doubt the position and future of St. Louis justify high rates for property. One of the results of this state of things is that housekeeping is shunned by most persons of only moderate means; and the boarding system prevails to a very great extent. A clerk or book-keeper, on a salary of \$1,200. to \$1,500, does occasionally commence his married life by renting a house for \$600 or \$700 a year; and filling it with expensive furniture; but the inevitable result is that in a

short time he finds it necessary to sell out and go board at a hotel or private house.

A good many Northerners have recently gone to Missouri and settled upon the graduated lands; and there is a disposition in the slave-holders to go further South. Some of the graduated lands in that State—lands of which the price has been reduced on account of the length of time they have been in the market without being sold—are purchasable at twelve and a half cents an acre; but they must be in undesirable situations, for the Hannibal and St. Joseph railroad company holds the 600,000 acres which it possesses at from \$5 to \$15 an acre. The graduated lands have remained unsold principally because Missouri is a slave State; and it is the prospect of her becoming free that now causes them to be taken up. The Hannibal and St. Joseph railroad company put it forward as one of the inducements to purchase their lands that Missouri is sure soon to become a free State. These lands extend all the way to the Kansas frontier; and the rates at which they are held is one of the proofs of how far it is necessary to go West to get any accessible lands at anything like a moderate price. Such a fact as this should give us a clear idea of the value of lands in Upper Canada. It is true these railroad lands are sold on credit; and it is open to the purchaser, who pays only two and a half per cent. interest, to choose his own term of credit.

Two of the railroads west of the Mississippi claim to be the commencement of Pacific railroads: that which

runs from St. Louis, through Jefferson City, and that which runs from Hannibal to St. Joseph. It is needless to say that they are rival routes. Both owe their existence to the Governmental assistance they have received. They received a large quantity of public lands in aid of their construction. In the Session of 1850-1, the Legislature of Missouri adopted a scheme of giving assistance to railroads; under which different projects were to be aided in the following proportions:—

Pacific Railroad, total State loan.....\$3,000,000

Portion of land grant about 150,000 acres.

S. W. branch Pacific Railroad State loan... 1,000,000

Portion of land grant about 150,000 acres.

Iron Mountain Railroad State loan..... 750,000

No land grant.

Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad State loan. 2,000,000

Land grant estimated at....600,000 acres.

North Missouri Railroad, State loan..... 2,000,000

Total State Loan authorized .. \$8,750,000

It was at first intended that the State should advance only half the cost of the work; and that for this advance it should have a lien on the road. The State bonds were to be given in amounts of \$50,000, on proof being furnished that the Companies had expended a like sum. In 1852, Congress granted to Missouri, alternate sections of lands on the railroads; but it was found that a large portion of these lands had been already taken up; and it was necessary for the State Legislature to come down with further assistance to the railroads, to the extent of

\$2,000,000, which was done. At an early period of the Pacific Railway undertaking, the citizens of St. Louis subscribed \$1,000,000 stock; and in 1852, the county of St. Louis subscribed \$1,200,000. The first two-hundred miles on this road has cost \$7,000,000; and the Company has failed to meet its engagement to pay the interest on the State bonds issued on account of the work; which failure it is expected the Legislature will take action upon: assume the payment of the interest itself. Minnesota has also projected a Pacific Railroad; the length of which, in that State, would be 320 miles, including the branch. It would be entitled to a share of the lands given by Congress to aid the construction of Railroads, in Minnesota. Of these three rival projects, nobody pretends to be able to say which is likely to be the successful one; while it seems to be universally admitted that the best route for a rival Pacific Railroad would be through British Territory.

From St. Louis I went up the Mississippi, twenty-four miles to Alton; and thence by the Illinois Great Western Railroad to Springfield, the capital of Illinois. As generally happens in these States, the commercial and the political capital of Illinois are two very different places. While Chicago is the commercial capital, Springfield, a place having 10,000 or 12,000 inhabitants, is the political capital. For a place of the size, Springfield is not an indifferent looking city. Its streets are tolerably wide; and that on which the principal private houses are to be found is planted with trees which have already attained very respectable dimensions. In re-

spect to population, the city has about held its own since the crisis. If there has been no increase, there has been no marked diminution, such as occurred in many other places. The residence of the Governor is a good house; and the State buildings are passable. In all these States, I find the office of Secretary placed on the right hand immediately on entering the State-house. These republican functionaries are sometimes from home, as was the case with the Secretary of State here, at whose office I called. In that case, however, they take care to have their duties performed by subordinates.

There was a large number of farmers in the city; their wagons being ranged on every street that forms the boundary of the square in which the State-house is situated. They did not appear to have brought much into the city. Some few of them had about a half a cord of bad wood each—oak—for which they uniformly asked \$1.50. Some of them had brought it seven miles. Hardly any of them—I could not find one—had brought in wheat. I conversed freely with numbers of them on the subject of the harvest, and they had all pretty nearly one story to tell: there was a light wheat crop. I met two farmers whose wheat had not been worth reaping; and one who, during the last three years, had lost from \$1,000 to \$1,500 in the attempt to grow wheat. In 1857, he put \$100 worth of seed-wheat into eighty acres, and reaped nothing. Next year, his crop failed again; and this year (1859) it was so bad that, after reaping a few acres, he found it would not pay for the

labor and abandoned the crop in the field. Winter wheat is sown almost exclusively in this part of the State; but year after year, it has suffered from winter-killing. This year, it has, according to the evidence of all the practical persons with whom I spoke on the subject, suffered from three causes: winter-killing, excessive wet in the Spring and the chinch bug. These are the principal causes; but there remain two more to be added: the wheat fly, about which I heard but little, and the drought which followed the excessive wet of the Spring. In answer to my enquiries how it was, if winter-wheat is so precarious a crop, that it is not abandoned for Spring-wheat, I was told that the wet Springs prevent the grain being got into the ground in good season; and the hot weather that follows bakes the surface hard. This crop is therefore considered even more precarious than winter wheat. The farmers were generally united in the opinion that wheat would not average over ten bushels an acre. The few who had tested the productiveness by threshing, were inclined to put the average still lower. One who had threshed 400 bushels said the average yield did not exceed eight bushels an acre. Regarding the prospects of the corn crop, I found great contrariety of opinion. But it was probable that, on the whole, this crop would be good; though it would be very difficult to arrive at any intelligent conclusion as to the probable yield. In some places, it was attacked by a worm at the root, as well as by the chinch bug. Potatoes had been considerably damaged by the drought.

One farmer told me that he first saw the chinch bug three years ago, though I find that it came long before then. A field of wheat stubble is sometimes ploughed round to prevent this insect leaving it, for the corn crop. Wheat, this farmer said, was reduced to half a crop by winter-killing. He had himself grown no more than was necessary for his own consumption. Another farmer, whose Spring wheat had been attacked by the chinch bug, was of opinion, and he said many with whom he had conversed agreed with him, that it is not worth while for a farmer in this part of Illinois to attempt to grow wheat at all; that the proper plan is to grow corn and feed it to hogs, the farmer finding his remuneration in the sale of the pork. This farmer considered ten bushels an acre a good yield for wheat. In this climate there are frequent alternations of frost and thaw during winter. The unbroken prairie winds drift the snow, sweeping the surface bare in many places, and leaving the wheat crop unprotected. A thaw, followed by a frost, completes the work of winter-killing.

Rich as the prairie soil undoubtedly is, it follows the same laws of exhaustion as other soils, when a particular ingredient is taken from it year after year without being returned. Already the farmers, who have been settled in the neighborhood of Springfield twelve or fourteen years, begin to complain that the land is "run down." From ten to fifteen years of constant cropping, without manure, they say, suffices to reduce the productiveness of the soil in a very sensible degree.

In Springfield and neighborhood, there is, at all times, plenty of ague. A farmer who had lived a few miles

east of the city for five years, told me that he had had ague every year; and a farmer's son, a young man named Bell, who was born in the neighborhood, said he took a terrible ague chill last Spring, followed by typhoid fever. He says he has known many cases of fatal congestive chill; one in which a person went to bed well at night, and was found dead in his bed next morning. There is no river or marsh that I could see about the city; and yet there is ague, by whatever cause it may be produced; there is more or less at all times, but every where autumn seems to be peculiarly the ague season. It does not now prove fatal so frequently as it formerly did, by inducing other diseases.

Tolono is the junction of the Illinois Great Western and the Illinois Central Branch Railroads. The distance from Springfield is a little over seventy miles. Prairie land predominates over the route; and there is more unbroken than under cultivation—in some places for miles together there is no cultivation—but there are some patches of woods on the borders of the three streams that are crossed. Of the land under cultivation, by far the greater part was growing corn; and generally speaking, this crop looked well. We passed a few pieces of "sod" corn that were very poor. There was also some land, which had been ploughed that year, not under crop. By ploughing late and exposing the sod to the scorching rays of the sun, it is more likely to produce good wheat the next year than it would have been if ploughed early and put under corn, which would prevent the sun operating so directly upon it. In some places, corn fields extend for a mile; and in others there

were miles and miles of prairie, in the natural state, neither having been mown nor grazed to any perceptible extent. In these places every thing is in its native wildness. And the railroad partakes of the nature of the country—it is wild too—and not being fenced it looks as if nobody owned it. This must be very dangerous, where large droves of cattle are sometimes found roaming about. The wild prairie has a more weedy look than that on the main branch of the Central. Probably not less than a dozen times prairie fowl started up beside the track; and in one flock I counted over twenty. Where there are some few scattered settlements, these birds are found in greater numbers; for the farmer gives them food in the crops he raises; and if there are not too many inhabitants to hunt them, they attain the greatest augmentation in new settlements. Tolono station, though surrounded by some houses, has wild prairie up to the very doors. There is scarcely a sign of cultivation for a mile in every direction.

The Illinois Central Company has raised the rate of interest it charges to purchasers of its lands, from three to six per cent; thus doing away with the only thing in the way of compensation for the high price charged for these lands.

LETTER IX.

Tolono to Kankakee—A "City" on the Prairies—Signs of suspended immigration to Illinois—Kankakee; its History—Half the population French Canadians—Father Chiniquy and Intemperance; Innovations Introduced by him—St. Anne; Sufferings among the French Canadians there; their desire to return to Canada—Five French Canadian settlements; conditions of the Settlers—Terrible fatality of Ague through Congestive Chill—Successive failures of Crops and the Causes—French Canadians on the Detroit River compared with those in the Illinois Settlements—Price of the Illinois Central Railroad Company's Lands—Bourbonnais—Chicago: causes of its rapid Growth—Manners and Customs in the West.

We had not long left Tolono for Kankakee when the train passed through a city of the modernized Eden class. It is a way station, surrounded by two or three houses, in a far-stretching wilderness of unbroken prairie. Its name escaped me as it fell from the lips of the conductor; but it was marked on the ticket "P. City." The meaning of the formidable initial I shall not attempt to make out: let it suffice to know that a western city does not necessarily imply a collection of houses and an aggregated population, civilized or uncivilized: it is frequently given to places for which man has done nothing beyond a slight disfigurement, which is the more easily forgiven because scarcely perceptible.

A noticeable feature is the small amount of prairie broken up this year; as it goes to establish the decline or entire absence of emigration to Illinois.

Kankakee, of which no two persons agree on the extent of the population, some placing it as high as 5,000, and others as low as 3,000, is pleasantly situated on a gentle declivity which rises from the banks of the Kankakee river. I obtained a fine view of it from the top of the court house. The river sweeps past the city

in a semi-circle; the points of which tend to embrace it. Between the river, which is skirted by a fringe of trees, and our stand point—the top of the court house—lies the town, among the white houses of which, mostly of wood, is an agreeable sprinkling of native trees, which causes it sometimes to get the not inapt designation of “Grove City.” On the opposite side, which we must suppose to cover the other half of the circle, is an unbroken prairie; at the junction of which with the wood the bright tower of the Roman Catholic Church of Bourbonnais may be seen glistening in the sun. The city lies to the north; the open prairie—dotted here and there with a speck of trees—on the opposite side.

The history of the Bourbonnais Grove, which cannot be separated from the history of Kankakee or any other of the French Canadian settlements in the neighbourhood, I learned from an old resident, who has spent 27 years of his life here, and who seemed to delight in the boast that he served out bread and water to the original settlers. FRANÇOIS BOURBONNAIS, a French Canadian, and an Indian trader, who married a Pottawatomie squaw, went there about thirty years ago. He became possessed of the site on which the town stands, as the dowry of his squaw and the portion of her and his children; so that in marrying a squaw he was in reality marrying a wealthy heiress; and every child which she bore him was so much addition to his wealth. By a treaty with the United States Government, the Pottawatomes were each to get divided among them so much land. BOURBONNAIS thus got, through his wife

and his and her children, who claimed through her, eight or ten sections or square miles of land, at this point. He traded here down till about the year 1834 or 1835; and about 1836 he sold out chiefly or wholly to M. VESSER—I am not sure about the spelling—also a French Canadian, TODD, an American, and HUBERT, a Chicago man. VESSER came to own a large part of the property in this neighbourhood; for in addition to his purchase from BOURBONNAIS, he took advantage of the departure of the Indians, west of the Mississippi, to add largely to his estate. To them, on their departure, land at Kankakee ceased to have any value; and there were plenty of them who were only too glad of the opportunity of getting a horse and a gun for their claim. The fame of the success of BOURBONNAIS and VESSER soon spread; and other Canadians followed in their track. Interested parties sent letters to Canada, describing the place in glowing colors; and thus it came to pass that a small stream of emigration from Lower Canada set in towards this point. The original settlers remaining here formed the nucleus of a colony; and there is nothing surprising in what followed. Emigration from the East to the West has been universal; and the fact that the French Canadians were another race, who spoke another language and were the subjects of another State, was not sufficient entirely to exempt them from a law of which the operation was general. After the settlement had gathered some strength—perhaps about twenty years ago—the first French Canadian priest went to Kankakee. VESSER gave ground for a church, which, in his ample means was to find its chief suste-

nance. He sold small patches of land to the new colonists on credit; the terms operating as a temptation to purchase.

About one half the population of Kankakee is said to be French Canadian; and I should judge, from what I saw, that the estimate is not far from the truth. Father CHINIQUEY, who has done much to foster this colony, it will be remembered, first set out as an Apostle of Temperance. It is to be feared that, at Kankakee, his labors in that direction, have not produced any very permanent results. Drinking saloons are conspicuously plentiful; and a French Canadian informed me that his countrymen here drink far more than it is customary for them to drink in Lower Canada. Father CHINIQUEY seems to be held in respect; but the Roman Catholic population are divided on his merits; about one half taking part with him and the other half against him. He has already introduced some innovations, such as reading mass in French, but he has hitherto refused to listen to all propositions for founding a separate organization; a course which I find has been recommended to him by Americans. He is encouraging his people to read the bible; and evidently preparing them for that separate organization which he thinks would, at present, be premature. They are already distinguished from the rest of the Catholics of the place in two or three particulars. They call themselves "Christian Catholics;" they listen to mass in their native tongue. Father Chiniquy has the sympathy of the Protestant and American portion of the population; he is on friendly terms with and takes counsel of them, but

he does not always accept it, as is proved by his refusal to "organize," in accordance with their suggestions.

Father Chiniquy resides at Ste. Anne, or Beaver Creek, some twelve miles from Kankakee. That there is much suffering among the French Canadians, at Ste. Anne, I was first informed by a Protestant minister with whom I conversed; and the statement was only too conclusively corroborated afterwards. This is the third year that the crops have failed at that settlement. Such as can get away are returning to Canada, or seeking a new home in another part of the State; one of them assured me that nothing but the want of means prevented them from returning "in thousands." This may possibly be an exaggeration: but from all I heard on this point I cannot doubt the desire of large numbers to return who have not the means of carrying out their wishes. Even in Kankakee employment was very scarce. A French Canadian assured me that laborers were expected to work for fifty cents a-day; and there were many who could not get employment at all. An old settler, an American, detailed some cases of individual distress among the French Canadians. Two days before our conversation, he said, a French Canadian went to him and said he was willing to work for thirty-seven and a half cents a day, but that he was unable to find employment. Next day he returned; and said he had not been able to obtain employment even at the rates in question; that his children were starving for want of bread. My informant gave him three yolk shillings and some food: though, as a general rule, he said, it is useless for a Frenchman to tell an American that he

has nothing to eat, and no means of procuring anything. A French Canadian, a working man, told me that, on the day before he had to give one of his countrymen a dollar to buy some corn to keep him from starvation.

There are no less than five French Canadian settlements in this neighborhood: Kankakee, Bourbonnais, Ste. Anne, St. Mary's, situated beyond St. Anne, on Beaver River, and Iroquois. A portion of these settlers planted themselves in the woods that fringe the border of the Kankakee; but the majority of them are upon prairie land. Their farms vary in size from a few acres to some of the largest to be found in the country; and while some are doing well others are in the condition described. A large number of them have forty acre lots. Some of them cannot get a bit of wood for fuel short of nine miles; and in the cold weather of last winter they burned corn cobs as a substitute for more substantial fuel. Some who live at St. Anne, eke out an existence by cutting wood in an unoccupied swamp, four or five miles from that place, and selling it at Kankakee. A man will cut a load one day and draw it home with a span of horses or a yoke of cattle; and next day take it to Kankakee, where it fetches about \$1 50; all the remuneration he gets for two days' labor and the use of his team. I saw a Frenchman from France—for there are a few of these intermingled with the French Canadians—who had brought in a load of hay for which he asked \$1 50. The gathering of the hay and bringing it to market must have consumed two days. He protested that he could raise more from two arpents in France than from forty arpents here; and de-

clared that nothing prevented his going back but the want of means. Of the crops he gave a very bad account: the small grains he insisted were utterly worthless, and although this may have been his own case, I was told by others that wheat would average about five bushels, in the neighborhood. One man who lives twelve miles from Kankakee, and who got billious fever in July—he still (August 18) had a most emaciated appearance—told me that he had reaped 80 acres of wheat, but said he should have been richer if he had allowed it to remain in the field, as what he gathered did not pay the cost of cutting. In the presence of some residents of Kankakee the farmer alleged that about every other person had the ague; but this was a manifest exaggeration, and the statement was denied on the spot. One person told how many years he had been here—I forget the number—without ever having had the ague. A resident doctor said there was just sickness enough “to keep him comfortably busy;” but nothing unusual. Mr. Allen Rakestaw, who had lived at Kankakee twenty seven years, says he must have known as many as 200 fatal cases of congestive chill. He puts his faith in a sort of No. 6 of his own concoction, which, from the compounds he mentioned, must be particularly hot, as preventive of all kinds of miasmatic diseases.

The failure of the wheat crop is attributable to several causes: winter killing—a good deal was ploughed up in the Spring—the excessive wet Spring and dry Summer, and the chinch bug. Before the 18th August, when it rained a little, rain had fallen but once in two months. The chinch bug has the smell of a similarly

named creature which sometimes makes unwelcome intrusion into human habitations. It appears in such numbers as sometimes entirely to cover the corn stalks. The extreme variableness of the climate is complained of.

At Kankakee, I met a young man who had lived among the French Canadians, on the Detroit river, three years; and he says that, as a rule, they are far better off there than their countrymen are in these settlements. Their rule here is to be satisfied with little; though there are some who display as much enterprise as any part of the population. I met some who said they preferred Illinois to Canada; and at least an equal number who declared their preference for Canada over Illinois, and their desire to return.

Kankakee, though probably making no great advance, is not declining in population. The river which bathes its feet, and the grove by which it is sheltered, are both pretty. The river has a limestone bed and ought to be free from ague poison, while the grove adds much to the beauty of the landscape.

At the Kankakee station, I examined the field book of the Illinois Central Railway Company's lands. The prices, which they demand for lands, in the neighborhood, range from \$8 to \$22 an acre. At Tolono, an ex-engineer of the Company, assured me that, for a cultivated farm, one mile from that place, he got a cash rent of \$3 to \$4 an acre. This is an enormous figure for lands that can be bought at say an average of \$12 an acre; and it tells an instructive tale about the cost of fencing, on which subject I took great pains to collect reliable information.

No fruit can be grown in the neighboring prairies. It is necessary to go 200 miles south of Kankakee before any large quantity of fruit can be raised.

I visited Bourbonnais, a distance of two and a half miles from Kankakee. The village is placed in the shelter of the border of wood that lines the Kankakee river; and its population is exclusively French Canadian. The houses are frame, painted white, and have generally an appearance of neatness. The settlers here are better off than those at Ste. Anne. In the village I called at a tavern, on the platform of which, in front of the bar-room, were six or seven French Canadians in conversation. It happened, singularly enough, that they were relating to one another their ague experience; how they had shaken with chills and burnt with fever. On my questioning them about the health of the place, they said the ague was less frequent than formerly; that there was no marsh or anything else about the river to produce it. One of them said he had taken the ague on the open prairie. The settlement at Bourbonnais he described as being upon the whole, in a prosperous condition. It is therefore improbable that it will suffer the same diminution of population as that at Ste. Anne is being subjected to. Father Chiniquy is endeavoring to direct these outgoers to another part of the State, whither several have already gone; and it remains to be seen what will be the success of their new venture.

Chicago, which is distant about three hours, by rail, from Kankakee, is, in the rapidity of its progress, the wonder of the West. I say West, because it is usual to apply that term to Chicago; but now when it has been as-

certained that the Missouri is navigable over three thousand miles from its mouth, and when the Minnesota or St. Peter's river is regularly navigated over six hundred miles above St. Paul, it is time we began to look upon Chicago not as occupying a position in the "Far West," but as a central city of the Union. It is no longer a Western city, its position being considered in relation to other points, and as it can never be regarded as an eastern city, it ought to be assigned its true position as a central city. One of the causes of its rapid growth is to be found in the circumstance that there are but few harbors on Lake Michigan; and every thing has to centre at a few points. If all the lake towns between Bay, Quinté and Toronto, were added to the latter, it might boast a degree of progress equal to that of Chicago. But it so happens that Lake Ontario abounds with harbors; and that towns and villages have sprung up on its northern shore every where at the distance of a few miles. The consequence is that there is not that extraordinary development, at any one point, which we witness at the two principal harbors on the Western shore of Lake Michigan—Chicago and Milwaukee. There are buildings, perhaps I may say blocks of buildings, in Chicago which would do no discredit to the finest streets in Genoa. But it may be permissible to doubt that Chicago has the same solidity as St. Louis. While it presents a finer appearance than St. Louis, it is pretty clear that this arises rather from a love of show than the existence of superior wealth.

It is impossible to travel through these Western States, as I have done, without being struck with the

certain peculiar habits of the people; some of which are highly commendable, while others are precisely the reverse. If we may judge from appearance, they are certainly a sober people. I nowhere saw, whether at hotel or steamboat, a single person take, at dinner, anything stronger than water, unless it were tea; no wine, no beer, no spirits. At the hotels in the larger cities, the bills of fare contain lists of breakfast and dinner wines; but nobody takes them. The influence of custom is so strong that those who would be inclined to drink wine or some other stimulant to dinner, refrain from doing so, no doubt under the sort of restraint which compels people to avoid any singularity that would make them subjects of remark. The lager beer invasion seems to have succeeded all over the west; and although the Germans are undoubtedly the best customers of this beverage, the Americans do not wholly eschew it. Enormous quantities of it are consumed. Milwaukee has the honor of being the monster brewery that partially supplies the country for a thousand miles; for the familiar sign "Milwaukee lager beer" meets you equally at St. Paul and St. Louis. But if we take it for granted that the Western Americans are a sober people, nothing is more certain than that they seek excitement and stimulus in other things than drink. Everywhere on the Mississippi, you are sure to meet two things, in profusion—tobacco juice and billiard saloons. Steamboat decks and the floors of railroad cars are liable to become liquid with tobacco juice, in utter disregard of the danger to ladies' dresses, now that the fashion makes them weep everything that comes in their way; and there is

some danger that contrary winds may carry the noxious solution into unpleasant proximity with the faces of un-offensive passengers. The extent to which tobacco is chewed is extraordinary ; and the little care that is taken of the disposition of the saliva which it excites attracts the attention of every traveller.

Men who indulge in this practice have seldom a ruddy appearance ; and from some cause or other American women carry their ages very badly. Those of them who wear best, belong to the class who are obliged to labor for a subsistence. At thirty-five an American woman looks as old as an English woman looks at fifty. Americans explained to me that this arises from the absence of exercise to which American women are habituated. Nothing -but the necessity, which arises from poverty, seems capable of arousing them to sufficient activity to preserve their health. The consequence is that beauty has taken refuge among the daughters of the poor. It is proverbial that the richer an American is, the less active and the more unhealthy his daughters are likely to be. And without health, beauty, if it can exist at all, cannot be preserved.

It may well be doubted whether the general mode of living in the United States is conducive to health. At all public tables meat is served three times a-day, and almost every body seems to partake of it every time it is brought forward. Then the quantity of grease used is enormous. Potatoes are fried in grease ; beef stake is fried in grease ; and both of them are fairly fried to a crisp. Hot rolls for breakfast, hot rolls for tea ; and generally half cooked at that, leaving a clammy com-

promise between paste and bread in the middle. On the Mississippi boats, and at many hotels, coffee is just as common, and seems to be generally preferred, at tea, as at breakfast. This sort of feeding, with the excessive quantity of tobacco consumed by the men and the abstinence from exercise in all women who can afford to be inactive, tells upon the appearance of the people; and no doubt the appearance is, in some sort, an index to the health they enjoy. The Mississippi water, which, below the junction of the Missouri with that river—twenty-five miles above St. Louis—is as thick as mud, is everywhere, even at the best hotels, served out in its natural state. It is said to be harmless; and some will even tell you that it is a disadvantage to filter it.

I was struck with the large number of men on the wrong side of forty-five travelling with very young ladies. The advantage of travelling with ladies is very obvious. On the Mississippi steamers, the ladies and their male protectors are seated at table before the dinner bell rings for the mateless male passengers; and if the boat happens to be crowded, some of the latter will inevitably fail to get a place at the first table. In some of the railroads, there are notices apprising disconsolate bachelors and husbands who have left their wives at home, that "gentlemen with ladies have a first choice of seats." On the Illinois Central, there are ladies' cars, in which the gentlemen who accompany them are the only representatives of the rougher sex admitted. At hotels, the best apartments—the largest and the best furnished—are appropriated to gentlemen with ladies. In fact an American's passport is a woman; and the younger and prettier she is the better.

LETTER X.

General Remarks—Comparative Healthiness of Canada and Illinois—Winter Storms on the Prairies; Drifting of Snow and Difficulty of Locomotion—Fruit—Prairie Itch—Uncertainty of Wheat Crop—Relative Cost of getting Woodland and Prairie Farms under cultivation—Comparison between Canada and Illinois.

In any comparison between Illinois and Canada, there is a single consideration which must decide the preference of all who make an intelligent choice; all who are guided by the evidence. I refer to the relative value of life in the two countries. In Upper Canada, the number of deaths per thousand of the population is 8;* while in Illinois it is 13.6,† per annum. The value of life, as those figures show, is nearly seventy per cent. less in Illinois than in Canada. These statistics, which are, in both cases, extracted from the official census, are decisive of the question of the relative healthiness of Canada and Illinois. No amount of sophistry can alter the fact. In previous letters I have shown the class of diseases which, in Illinois, produce this relatively high mortality. They result chiefly from miasmatic influences, and appear in all the various shapes which miasmatic diseases are known to assume. Ague with its terrible train of disorders—bilious fever, pneumonia, "winter fever," typhoid and numerous others—is the great scourge of Illinois. From the comparatively high rates of mortality, as compared with Canada, we may form some idea of the amount of sickness and suffering

**Canadian Naturalist and Geologist*, June, 1859.

†De Bow's *Compendium of the Seventeenth Census of the United States*.

which afflict the population. Ague is a lingering, wasting disease ; often recurring with great regularity, at a particular season of the year. From the number of cases in which it proves fatal—generally in its indirect action in inducing other diseases—we may conceive the amount of ill health endured by the survivors. There are no reliable statistics to establish a decrease in the miasmatic diseases which afflict the population of Illinois ; but there is something like a general belief among the population that such decrease does take place a few years after the prairie land has been broken up. At first the exposure of the decayed vegetable matter to the rays of the sun produces disease ; but in the course of some years there is reason to believe that the effect is to induce an improved condition of salubrity. But in any case, the first generation of emigrants must be sacrificed ; and there is no reason to suppose that ague will ever entirely leave a country which it is impossible to drain. Nothing short of some general system of drainage can ever extirpate fever and ague from the flat prairies of Illinois. There are, at present, on the more extensive prairies, scarcely any outfalls by which the surface water could be carried off. There is, therefore, every reason to suppose that the great difference in the value of life in Canada and Illinois will long continue. The unsheltered prairies, on which there is frequently, though not always, a cooling breeze in summer, are comfortless to the last degree in winter. The storm blows over them unbroken by forest or tree, for miles and miles upon a stretch ; the high winds add immensely to the

sensation of cold ; and so far as comfort is concerned a comparatively high temperature is as bad as a much greater degree of positive cold in a sheltered woodland country. The wind finds out and penetrates every crevice in the dwelling houses ; and often renders it difficult to keep up the temperature to the point of comfort. It produces a large crop of neuralgia in those exposed to it on the prairies. It sweeps the surface bare of snow, which it drifts into heaps ; and thus locomotion is rendered exceedingly difficult. Sleighing is impossible, and wheeled carriages have to be dragged over the frozen or unfrozen ground, as the case may be, for the thaws are frequent. There is besides, I was told, a peculiar disease called the "prairie itch," which breaks out in blotches, the size of half dollars, on the palms of the hands and other exposed parts of the body. I met a person who had been attacked with it soon after his arrival on the rolling prairies, where it most generally appears ; and he states that few new settlers escape it.

The uncertainty of the wheat crop, in Illinois, is so great as to set at defiance all calculations regarding it. Fanciful estimates of probable yield are easily enough made ; but experience shows their utter worthlessness. The experience related to me by the Rev. Dr. Parker of Illinois farming, and given in a previous letter, is of itself conclusive on this point. The uncertainty of the wheat crop is far greater in Illinois than in Canada. The unbroken winds drift the snow, on the prairies ; and expose the winter wheat to the frost. Frequent thaws occur during the winter ; and the frosts which follow do immense damage to the growing of wheat. It

is this exposure of the crop, together with the frequent alternations of frosts and thaws that cause the Winter killing, which makes Winter wheat so precarious a crop. In Canada, in a more northern latitude, the shelter of patches of wood which are found in connection with every farm, prevents the drifting of the snow to any great extent; and thaws occur with much less frequency. The wheat finds snow to be its best mantle and surest protection. In Illinois, Spring wheat * is sometimes difficult to get into the ground owing to the wetness of the weather in the Spring. But the uncertainty attending Winter wheat causes Spring wheat to be far more generally sown. In the northern part of the State the proportion of Winter wheat grown is very small. In the southern part of the State, more Winter than Spring wheat is probably grown. Both Winter and Spring wheat are attacked by the chinch bug; an insect unknown in Canada.

Corn is the principal crop in Illinois. In travelling through the State, you are struck with the extent to which it predominates over every other crop. The yield is probably equal to what it is in any other State; but corn is so heavy in proportion to its value that it will not bear carriage a great distance, except upon Railroads or on water. This circumstance creates a necessity for consuming it on the spot where it is grown. Illinois farmers therefore turn their attention to the raising and fattening of cattle and pigs. Were it possible to grow Winter wheat with greater success, the culti-

*"Spring wheat succeeds well, but has been blighted for a few years past." Gerhard's *Illinois as it is*, 1855.

vation of Corn would not occupy the prominent place that it does; a fact which shows that Corn ranks as a secondary crop.

A prairie farm can be more readily got under cultivation than a wood-land farm; but there can be no doubt that, take it all in all, the balance of advantages is in favor of wood-land over prairies. Wood-land can be cleared and fenced for about what it costs to fence a prairie farm. On the cost of fencing I made many enquiries, and obtained a good deal of information. But I prefer to adopt the statement of an Illinois author,* on this subject; one which has been in circulation, in the State, since 1856, without ever, so far as I can learn, being called in question. According to this statement, it costs \$506 to put a ring-fence round forty acres: if the cost of the internal fences necessary to enable the owner to cultivate his land to the best advantages,—say by dividing the farm into ten acre fields—be added, the whole cost of fencing alone occasions a greater outlay than is requisite, both to clear and fence a wood-land farm. The cost of fencing, on the prairies, is said to diminish with the size of the farm; but even so, it is doubtful whether

* In a work, entitled *Illinois as It Is*, by Mr. Fred. Gerhard, published at Chicago, in 1857, we find, among the most extravagant eulogiums of Illinois, the following statement: "In building board fences, iron posts and pine boards are made use of, and constructed in such a manner that two posts and three boards constitute a pannel. The cost would be, for boards and hauling, \$1.15 per rod; and the boards for 820 rods of fencing, the amount for forty acres, would cost \$368. About 700 posts, at 11 cents each, would cost \$77. For putting up the fence, the cost would be—for digging post-holes and setting posts, \$28; for nails, \$19; for nailing, \$14; making the whole cost of fencing forty acres, \$506." This is over \$18 an acre—equal to the cost of clearing and fencing a wood-farm—and the lot has only a ring-fence round it. Divide it into fields of ten acres, as a forty acre farm ought to be, and add the cost of erecting buildings in a country where lumber cost \$16 to \$18 per 1,000 feet, and an accurate idea of the facilities of prairie farming will then be obtained.

it will not cost more to bring a prairie than a wood-land farm into cultivation. For not only has the materials for fencing, in the former case, to be purchased and brought from a distance: it is the same with the lumber necessary for the construction of a house and farm buildings. The wood which the wood-land farmer has for nothing, the prairie farmer has to purchase at a high figure, both for fencing and building. Fuel too has to be purchased on the prairies, while on wood-lands it is to be had in abundance for the trouble of cutting.

On the prairies there is little hydraulic power; it might almost be said there is none; for wherever rivers occur they are invariably fringed with wood. On the extensive prairies the old-fashioned wind mills have to be erected; but in many parts of Illinois you may go hundreds of miles without seeing one. Wheat must be sent great distances to be ground for domestic purposes. Wells have to be dug in all parts of the prairies; and this is often a matter of considerable trouble and expense. Instances have occurred of persons leaving the State solely on account of the difficulty of obtaining water. It is, however, obtained with certainty, in many parts of the State, without digging an extraordinary depth. Whenever the new settler is inconsiderate enough to slake his thirst by the impure water found in the sloughs—which invariably dry up in the latter part of the summer—he is pretty sure to pay dearly for his temerity in sucking in disease with the water intended to nourish him.

Fruit is grown to a very limited extent in Illinois. In the northern part scarcely any is grown at all.

The open prairies do not afford the requisite shelter for fruit trees; and it is necessary to go a long distance from the northern frontier to find apples or other common fruits cultivated with even the most moderate success. The great difficulty would seem to be a want of shelter for fruit trees on the prairies; for in Canada, apples are exceedingly prolific and successful, and not less so on the Island of Montreal than in the western part of the Province.

The Government of the United States pursues a very different system with regard to the disposal of its public lands, from that in operation in Canada. It sells only for cash, and imposes no conditions of settlement on the purchaser. The result is that wealthy speculators in the old States, buy up enormous quantities of land in all accessible positions, and thus the price becomes enhanced to the actual settler. The system of pre-emption enables the poor settler to obtain possession of land for two years, before he is required to pay the purchase money, it is true; but if he squat on Government lands, not in the market, he runs the risk of losing the entire fruits of his labor, when the lands are brought into the market, by means of public auction. In Canada, on the contrary, the public lands are sold for cash or on a credit of five years, at the option of the purchaser; and in either case at a price below that fixed by the United States Government. The purchaser is obliged to conform to conditions of actual settlement; so that speculation in public lands is under these regulations—which have only been a short time in force—becoming impossible. The settler obtains the advantage of the original low price.

In this respect, the contrast between the United States and Canada is striking. A settler can start in the world, in the latter country, upon far less capital than in the former; because he can purchase his land at a lower figure, and on a long term of credit. As a large proportion of emigrants are not over-burthened with money, the advantages which Canada offers to them, as compared with the United States, must, when they come to be generally known, be sufficient to decide the choice of thousands, in favor of the wood-lands of that Province, watered by magnificent lakes and living streams, which abound with every variety of fish; where the certainty of health, and the chances of life are far greater than they are in the flat and sickly prairies of Illinois.



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